Trespassing

The Subversive Travel of Indonesian Women in Literature and Performance

Jennifer Goodlander

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To all the women who travel

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Author Biography

Jennifer Goodlander is an Associate Professor at Indiana University in the Department of Theatre and Drama as well as the Director of the Southeast Asian and ASEAN Studies Program. Jennifer has published numerous articles and two books: *Women in the Shadows: Gender, Puppets, and the Power of Tradition in Bali* (Ohio University Press, 2016) and *Puppets and Cities: Articulating Identities in Southeast Asia* (Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2018). Jennifer remains active as a director and has performed Balinese *wayang kulit*, or shadow puppetry, at international festivals and around the United States.

Introduction—Trespassing Across a Man's World

Na Willa, a young girl, wants to grow up to be like Mak, her mother. Mbok (the household servant), declares that since the "olden days" girls have always grown up like their fathers:

> "If I were a boy, could I be like Mak?"
> "Yes, you could," says Mbok.
> "Then I want to be a boy," I say.
> "How? You're a girl. You'll always be a girl!"
> "I'll keep my trousers on."
> "That's impossible, Noni. You're a girl. A girl." (Gaudiamo 2019, Ch. 1)[1]

Disappointed, Na Willa begins to cry and cry. She cries when her mother comes home and keeps crying as Mother talks to Mbok to find out what happened. Mother finally calms Na Willa by reassuring her she can be just like her mother *and* her father, no matter what Mbok or anyone else says.

The tale described above comes from the children's book, *The Adventures of Na Willa* by Reda Gaudiamo. This collection of short stories describes the life of a little girl living in Surabaya, Indonesia. She plays games with her friends and loves to try new things; sometimes leading to trouble or misadventure. The author first wrote these short stories about Willa on her Facebook page and later published them in magazines and books. *The Adventures of Na Willa* is the English translation of several of these stories.[2] Throughout the story, Na Willa's adventures, or travels,

1 *The Adventures of Na Willa* is only available as an e-book without page numbers, so I will use the chapter numbers for the citations.

2 A film version, called *Na Willa*, was released in February, 2026. It was the second film from director-writer Ryan Adriandhy, producer Anggia Kharisma and producer

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continue to challenge the norms of society and what spaces a girl might inhabit. The themes and methods underpinning Gaudiamo's collection of stories provide insight into the ideas in my book.

In the English edition, Gaudiamo's stories come together to form a kind of narrative that describes Na Willa's various adventures. The early chapters describe the places and people of her world. Na Willa lives in a house with a playroom where she plays with her doll, a toy gorilla, and pretends to cook meals out of leaves and twigs in clay pots. Her best friend, Farida (called Ida), lives next door with her many brothers and sisters. While Na Willa and her family are ethnic Chinese and Christian, Ida's family is Muslim and wear traditional Javanese clothes. Other local kids are Dul, an older boy who plays marbles, flies kites, and jumps on trains; Bud, who is the youngest and always has snot running out of his nose; and Warno, a boy with a crippled leg who once called Na Willa a "Chinese dog."[3] She reacted by hitting him, but then got in trouble because, as her mother explained, it was not acceptable to ever hit someone who is disabled. Each character and place in the story portray different aspects of everyday life in Indonesia and give insight into the values that influence behavior.

The author, Reda Gaudiamo, explains that she created Na Willa so that people might better understand why children act as children (Assa 2023, 76). Many of the stories are ostensibly lessons to teach Na Willa the skills and behaviors to grow into a "proper" woman—a wife and mother. She learns to cook, to go to market, and to do laundry. When Ida's big sister gets married, Na Willa learns about the responsibilities of being a wife. Rather than happiness, Ida's sister is sad to be marrying a fat man who is much older, but also it is her duty as a woman. As Mak explains, "marriage means you are ready to be a woman and take care of a house and your husband." Na Willa realized, "she must be feeling sad because she won't be able to play anymore" (2019, Ch. 24).

Throughout, the motif of travel and adventure allow Na Willa to challenge those ideals of a "proper" woman. When she asks her friend Dul to take her onto a train with him, he exclaims, "I've never seen a girl

---

Novia Puspa Sari. The trio previously worked together on *Jumbo*, one of Indonesia's highest grossing films.

3 There is a long history of discrimination against ethnic Chinese in Indonesia and other parts of Southeast Asia. For more, see Suryadinata 2008.

jump onto a train like me" (2019, Ch. 14). Her father travels on a sailboat for work and loves the excitement of the open sea and visiting different ports. Every time he comes home, he brings Na Willa a new book that her mother teaches her to read (2019, Ch. 9). In another story, Na Willa imagines a milk fish with many eyes because that is her favorite part to eat, but Na Willa also thinks about the adventures all those eyes might inspire— "Imagine what it would be like? You'd want to go here. And there. And EVERYWHERE" (2019, Ch. 8). Throughout each tale, Na Willa learns through adventure and constantly pushes the boundaries of what it means to be "good."

One day, Nyonya Chang, an American woman married to an Indonesian, visits Mak and Na Willa. Nyona Chang declares that Willa should begin attending school, because "she's got to get used to the whole world of school. She needs to make friends beyond her neighbors" (2019, Ch. 25). This establishes an alternative to the (feminine) lessons centered in the home with the promise of the world that the school provides. But at first, school is not a nice place. The students, and even the teacher, stare at Na Willa strangely. They not only laugh at her name, but Na Willa isn't given a book, and two girls even pull her hair. When Na Willa tries to fight back the teacher grabs her by her ears. Finally, Na Willa escapes and heads home. After learning about what happened, Mak declares that she will find a different school for her daughter. "When the lamps are lit on the ship, the sailor plays on the boat…" sings Mak to lull Na Willa to sleep. They will travel together to find a better school (2019, Ch. 29).

There are many sights and modes of travel along Na Willa's journey to opportunity. The next day, Na Willa and her mother travel by bike all over and visit many schools. They go by the ones with big playgrounds and noisy children. They keep singing as they go and pass all kinds of vehicles. "I can't remember anymore how long we must have been riding along this big road. There are cars, *becaks*, bicycles, trams." One school looks promising, but it is called "Putra Sejati." Putra means "boys" and Sejati means "true." Mak exclaims "Where are the *putri*—the girls?" So they keep going. Finally, they arrive at a school called TK Juwati (which means "beautiful") that has a yellow door and a wonderful garden. Mak determines this is the perfect school for Na Willa.

Na Willa doesn't find freedom only in actual travel, but throughout

books and the art of reading reveal additional adventures. Na Willa exclaims, "I loved hearing Mak reading stories. Sometimes she whispered. Sometimes she roared. She would even sing. I never ever get bored." Eventually, Na Willa would read stories to her mother, "We have a lot of fun with books" (2019, Ch. 3). In the last chapter of the book travel and literature blend together as instruments of opportunity. There is a journey—Na Willa and Mak walk to the new school. "Mak holds my hand and Mbok follows us then closes the fence behind us. We go out and walk down the alley. We turn left, then right, then go straight then right then left and… WE ARRIVE." At school the children clap in happiness to meet Na Willa. And there is literature—her teacher reads a book that takes them to new places—the book is the story of Ali Baba and pictures pop up from each page. Na Willa can't wait to tell her family about her adventures at school (2019, Ch. 30). I will return to the powerful intersections between travel and literature throughout this book.

Travel is not only a physical thing achieved through walking, biking, trains, or boats; travel happens in the mind. Through school, reading, and her many adventures, Na Willa defies the fate of her neighbor who ended up in an unhappy marriage. Na Willa will not be restricted by her gender, religion, or ethnicity; she challenges the status quo through adventure as trespassing. Na Willa pushes into the world with gusto, breaking rules and boundaries. Being naughty is how she learns and experiences the world. These stories allow for both Indonesian and English-speaking readers to come along for the ride.

Like Na Willa, the women characters and artists I describe in this book engage with the world as a means to expand opportunity and identity. I focus on literature, performance, drama, music, and film together with the lives of their creators to understand gender in Indonesia. The words and pictures of stories both reflect and create women's reality. Grace V. S. Chin and Kathrina Mohd Daud describe the power within creative expression in their introduction to a book about women's activism within literature in Southeast Asia:

> Narratives are thus crucial to the regulation and production of gender identities, norms and practices in any given society, since they carry meanings, ideas and imagery that—broadly speaking—reflect, inscribe and perpetuate hegemonic concepts of masculinity and femininity

> through the popular imaginary and culture. Significantly, narratives are imbricated in the social and cultural processes and productions of gender and sexual categorizations and hierarchies that constitute our lived reality (2017, 9).

Taken together, works by women expose complexities of different experiences, ideas, and identities. I am not seeking to articulate a monolithic modern feminine identity, but travel, especially trespassing, allows for slippage between multiple identities, between cultural norms, and personal agency.

Placing Women in Indonesian History and Literature

The most defining feature of Indonesia is its immense diversity. The song S*atu Nusa, Satu Bangsa, Satu Bahasa* ("One Island, One People, One Language") united the people of Indonesia during the struggle for Independence. It played for many years before movies and even now instills a sense of national pride (Jakarta Post 2010). The title refers to how a diverse place and people came together to form a single nation. The three parts of the song's title also index the three foci of this book: place, identity, and language.

Indonesia is a nation of islands, some 17,000, that stretches along the equator between the Indian and Pacific Ocean. The islands of Sumatra, Java, and Sulawesi are the largest, but the small island of Bali is the most internationally known because of its unique culture and popularity with tourists. Besides the Balinese, there are over 300 distinct ethnic groups, each with their own language and culture. The Javanese and the island of Java are the cultural and political centers of the archipelago. Like other parts of Southeast Asia, Indonesian culture and society were influenced by Hindu culture from India, by Buddhism and Confucianism from China, by Islam, and by European colonialism.

The boundaries of Indonesia are given historical weight by looking back to the Majapahit Empire in the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries; but the area known as the Dutch East Indies serves as the more contemporary blueprint for bringing these islands together. The Dutch first arrived in Indonesia at the end of the sixteenth century, and their rule eventually spread around the archipelago. After the end of Japanese occupation during World War II, Indonesia declared independence from

the Dutch on August 17, 1945; but gained full sovereignty only in 1949 after several years of violent struggle. The Javanese phrase, *Bhinekka Tunggal Ika* ("Unity in Diversity") became the motto of this new nation. In addition to the over 300 different ethnic groups, Indonesia has the largest population of Muslims in the world, but it is not an Islamic state, and churches and temples dot the landscape.

Historians of Indonesia frequently utilize literature as a resource to address the complexities of the diverse nation by emphasizing everyday experiences (Vickers 2013, 3). Adrian Vickers and Benedict R. O'G. Anderson both use literature to grasp the intricacies of how Indonesia began to see itself as a coherent and modern nation. One work, Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *Buru Quartet*,[4] often serves as an emblem of how nationalism emerged in dialogue with, and in opposition to, Dutch colonial rule. Vickers uses Pramoedya's retelling of the historical figure Tirto Adhi Suryo (fictionalized as Minke), one of Indonesia's first nationalists, to understand how Indonesia developed a modern sensibility and a national identity. Vickers argues that Pramoedya's writings show "that the idea of progress, the modern and the nation are contested by different social groups, mirroring the physical struggles of Indonesian history" (2013, 3). But what kind of role do these fictional works imagine for the woman of Indonesia?

Although the *Buru Quartet* features several strong female characters, Vickers and other historians do not often emphasize the feminine side of history. Scholars such as Barbara Hatley (1997) and Razif Bahari (2007) call out this exclusion and argue that women characters in historical novels, like those Pramoedya wrote, often challenge gender and colonial oppression as dual constructs and "enact the emergence of previously silenced female voices in Indonesian literature and history" (Bahari 2007, 43).

It is important to recognize that trespassing often entails a reaction

4 The *Buru Quartet* (*Tetrolgi Buru*) consists of four novels. They are so named because Pramoedya composed them while he was in prison on Buru island (he was denied pen and paper). After his release in 1979 they were eventually published. The Indonesian government suspected the works to be subversive and banned them. Even so, copies spread around the archipelago and the works were translated into other languages. The ban was lifted in 2000 and today Pramoedya is generally considered Indonesia's greatest author and the books are central to any study of Indonesian literature.

away from, or a revisioning of home, whether it is a domestic space or the homeland of the nation. Women characters in the first novel of the *Buru Quartet*, *Bumi Manusia* (*This Earth of Mankind*), reflect various configurations to home. On one hand, there is Minke's mother, who embodies the ideal of a submissive Javanese woman. She "conforms to her culture's ideals of femininity, showing more interest in domestic order, playing her role as propagator of traditional cultural values and supportive, subordinate wife and mother, which is how [Indonesian] nationalism idealizes the role of women" (Bahari 2007, 53). Minke rejects traditional Javanese power structures when he leaves home and his mother.

Minke finds a new family and home with the Nyai[5] Ontosoroh (often just called Nyai in the novel) and her daughter Annelies, helping to seed his revolutionary ambitions. Nyai was taken from her family as a small child in exchange for money to go live as a companion to the Dutch businessman, Herman Mellema. From him she learns Dutch, how to read, and how to manage his business. She has two children with him, her daughter Annelies and a son named Robert. Mellema falls ill from drugs, alcohol, and a venereal disease from the nearby brothel, and Nyai must take over the business. Her strength impresses and inspires Minke, but her story also demonstrates the power of the colonial regime when she is refused the right of inheritance after Mellema dies. They do not recognize her claim because she is Native and they were not married (Mellema left his Dutch wife in the Netherlands).

The story that drives *Earth of Mankind* is the love story between Minke and Annelies. They fall in love and marry, but physical ailments mirror Annelies' emotional turmoil anytime she imagines life without him. In the novel, her illness and sad fate stand as the ultimate symbol of Indo women's[6] powerlessness in the Dutch East Indies. After her father's death the Dutch court refuses to recognize her marriage to a Native and demands she go to the Netherlands to live with her father's family. Annelies, however, literally cannot live away from Indonesia—

5 Nyai is the Javanese word for "sister", but these were women who were servants, companions, and concubines to Dutch men in the East Indies.

6 Indo is the common term to describe someone of mixed Dutch and Indonesian descent. I describe this context fully in Chapter 5, in the section titled "Indo Identity."

her homeland, and she dies on the ship enroute to the Netherlands early in the second novel.

The experiences of Nyai and Annelies demonstrate how the national "desire for this land/woman/*pertiwi* is constructed as a masculine desire: the desire to possess it, see it, admire it, love it, protect it, and die fighting for its rivals" (Bahari 2007, 52). If the nation is masculine and represented within the land (*bumi*) then the Nyai and Annelies have no claim to the nation. Both Annelies and the Nyai are outcasts; unable to assume the roles of wife and mother, they are therefore of no use to the state. Pramoedya's female characters have agency, but, like many actual Indonesian women, "home" does not rest easy, and in life or death the characters travel away.[7]

If the story of the nation is a story of male individualism—what stories do women (actual and fictional) reveal? This book joins with other histories and studies of written and performing arts seeking to do more than "an uneasy exercise of insertion rather than integration" (Andaya 2006, 3). Unlike Nyai and Annelies, the women characters and authors I focus on in this book seek freedom and power through their relationships with place. They utilize modernity to travel by train, boat, and plane to different places in Indonesia and the world. I draw from literature to give women a contemporary history of their own place in Indonesia, and my readings of these creative works are informed by my own travel in and around Indonesia.

Travel and Trespassing

> I travel to define and assert my existential identity. I travel. Therefore I am. [...] Writers, it would appear, need travel, its freedom, its stimulation, and exposure to new and innovative points of view in the same way they need air, editors, and a reading audience (Mewshaw 2005, 3).

The idea for this book began during 2020, when travel, even outside of the home, was restricted. In this period when going anywhere was

7 In my analysis I do not intend to disempower Nyai and Annelies; they are truly remarkable characters. Later novels also include strong female characters such as the Chinese political activist Aung Mei in *Jejak Langkag* (*Footsteps*) or the intellectual Siti Sundari in *Rumah Kacah* (*House of Glass*). Rather, when developing my ideas for this book I was struck by how Annelies and Nyai enacted different estrangements from home that resonated with my developing ideas around trespassing.

suddenly impossible, I found myself intrigued by the role of travel as a central theme of subversion in literature produced by Indonesian women. The irony lay in the fact that this project took root during a global lockdown. Going to Indonesia for fieldwork—my usual way of working—was impossible during the Covid-19 pandemic. Faced with this challenge, I shifted my focus to novels and films, specifically those crafted by women. To my surprise, a considerable number of these works prominently featured travel as a central theme, activity, or visual motif. Additionally, I learned that actual travel within the global marketplace is essential for women authors and artists for their works to gain acceptance and success.[8]

Narratives and experiences of travel capture the imagination and have provided a vital contribution to world-making during the last few centuries. To travel always contains a sense of adventure and possibility; for example, people *travel* to vacation but merely *go* to work or school. Thus, travel writing is both the product of, and the imaginary movement brought to life within, the representation. In his book *Travel Writing*, Carl Thompson observes that travel writing serves two purposes. First it is a report of the travel that describes the journey, and the things and people encountered. Second, it reveals culture—both the culture of the writer and the culture(s) discovered while traveling (2011, 10). Stories of travel map fact and fiction, experience and imagination, knowable and unknowable, strange and familiar, onto constructions of identity and culture.

The travel writing that dominated during the colonial empires in the late nineteenth and twentieth century believed that travel, especially travel to Asia, became not only a means to know the world, but also a means to know oneself in contrast to the uncivilized "Other." Those works sat uncomfortably between fiction and fact; many describe or are inspired by the author's own travels to far-off destinations. The appeal to the reader was not to learn about a destination in preparation for his/her own journey, but to experience the adventure, different cultures, and transformation of the main character. In this book, I consider the different

8 I am not suggesting that male authors of Indonesian works do not also travel globally. International engagement and recognition are important for Indonesian artists in many genres. Rather, women authors in Indonesia uniquely struggle and global recognition functions as an essential aspect in their careers.

creative works by women as a kind of "travel writing" to destabilize the Orientalist and misogynistic history of the genre by empowering Asian women as the subject instead of the object.

In the twenty-first century, post-colonialism and globalization might seem to make this kind of travel literature obsolete. However, in 2005, short-story author Michael Mewshaw asserted during his plenary address to the South-Central Modern Language Association's annual convention in New Orleans that travel "in the classic mode" still existed (4). Mewshaw maintained that this kind of "classic travel" only happens in far-off places untouched by modernity (Westernization);[9] where "a few miles from the poshest hotel there's still enough horror for any writer to contemplate and any reader to be troubled and challenged by" (2005, 7). Mewshaw's formulation reinscribes the problematic definition of the genre of travel writing, constructing Asia as an exotic place where someone, usually male, travels *to*, not *from*.

Feminist performance studies scholar Sara Ahmed offers insight into how we might rethink the power dynamic of travel writing. She describes how the Orient enables the fantasies of the West in that "the Orient is not an empty place; it is full, and it is full of that which is 'not Europe' or not Occidental, and which in its 'not-ness' seems to point to another way of being in the world—to a world of romance, sexuality, and sensuality" (112). In this book, I explore how Indonesian women and authors have re-orientated the paradigm of the Orient that has persisted through their lives and work to redefine "not-me" and gain creative agency.

Reading and writing about literatures outside of one's own time and place always presents challenges. Writing about Indonesian literature as world literature, David Damrosch notes, "Lacking specialized knowledge, the foreign reader is likely to impose domestic literary values on foreign work, and even careful scholarly attempts to read a foreign work in light of a Western critical theory are deeply problematic" (2003, 5). What right might I, a white woman from the United States,

9 I am aware of how reductive terms like East/West, third-world, or "the Orient" are in describing the cultural, historical, and political differences between Asia and Europe/United States (or the Global South/Global North). In my use of such terms I am often engaging in specific discourses and my use of the terms reflects the language of authors or artists I am quoting or discussing.

have to write about the work of Indonesian artists and its meanings? One possible approach to this concern would be by arguing that world literature holds the key to some kind of human commonality—that we think, feel, and act in similar ways within certain given circumstances (Damrosch 2003, 10). I, however, want to resist any idea that Indonesian literature as a world literature means Indonesian literature is, or should be, universal. Universalism is especially limiting when considering the uniqueness of women's lived experiences. Indeed, women are often absent within the canon of world literature or within other declarations of universalism.

Damrosch concludes that world literature must function as "an established body of *classics*, as an evolving canon of *masterpieces*, or as *multiple windows on the world*" (Damrosch 2003, 15). Of course, works of art mean differently in different times and places, but for the works in this study, the tensions brought out by those differences are key.[10] I hope to write as a kind of window into the worlds of these women authors who write in and among the aesthetics, criticism, ideas, and circumstances inside and outside Indonesia. They trespass outside of the home, both in the domestic and national sense, to imagine an expansion of women's identities and by extension for Indonesian identities. Indonesian women's literature is comparative, national, and worldly.

Even though translation and global recognition are important for Indonesian authors to gain domestic recognition; Indonesian literature also remains essentially Indonesian. Literary scholar Tineke Hellwig observes that a focus on speaking and listening, rather than reading and writing, within Indonesian language programs outside of Indonesia, especially the United States, means that the reading audience and critical reception of Indonesian literature is primarily centered within Indonesia (2014, 218). But how large is this Indonesian reading public? Not very large. A 2012 survey conducted by UNESCO found that only

10 Damrosch elaborates the various responses that come from the difference, including novelty, similarity, and a middle-range between both (12). But in the end, he still relies on some kind of universal standard or message, together with a call for multiculturalism or "variety." His definitions still depend on a category of literature that depends on and encourages elitism. World literature is that which "a given community of readers *takes* as literature" (14, emphasis in original). Much of women's literature, by this definition is often excluded, sometimes even vehemently so by critics.

.01%, or one Indonesian person in every 1,000, indicated an interest in reading (Kalangi, 2007). Likewise, in her research on the use of literature in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, Nita Novianti noted that one of the difficulties was that college students were not avid readers in their native language; they were unfamiliar with Indonesian literature (2016, 45). To put this statistic in context, compare it to another 2012 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center that found 78% of people aged sixteen or older in the United States had read at least one book in the past year for pleasure.

Understanding the power of Indonesian literature within the context of Indonesia requires a greater understanding of how culture and the arts impact the construction of the nation. In the US, art primarily exists for pleasure, and any effort to establish national artists or funding is often met with criticism or contempt. For example, the budget for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is often less that one hundredth of a percent of the federal discretionary spending overall. In contrast, culture, as expressed through the arts, were central to debates about Indonesian politics and identity since independence to the present; it was a "national enterprise" (Bogaerts 2012, 226). As Jennifer Lindsey proclaims, "there was a common conviction that 'being Indonesian' was an issue of culture" (2012, 2). The arts offered a platform to imagine an Indonesian modernity and the position of tradition within that modernity. It was felt that Indonesian culture requires constant negotiation of East and West rather than one over the other. Indeed, a cultural manifesto drafted six months after independence was declared, exclaims, "We are the legitimate heirs to world culture, and we are furthering this culture in our own way."[11] Globalization offers both a theme and a method for understanding Indonesian identities as expressed in the arts and within the lives of artists. So, even though the reading of literature in Indonesia was and is restricted to a particular elite, educated, affluent, urban audience, it plays a larger role in articulating a modern Indonesian identity than similar cultural expressions do in the United States.

In this book, I expand the definitions of "travel" and "writing." For me, *travel* is the physical and/or imagined journey from one place to the

11 This is Jennifer Lindsey's translation of "*Kami adalah ahli waris yang sah dari kebudajaan dunia dan kebudajaan ini kami teruskan dengan cara kami sendiri*." For more on the cultural manifesto see Lindsey 2012, 10.

other, often across national borders, that emphasizes a contrast between home and away, between self and "Other." For my purposes, I have expanded the notion of *writing* to also mean film, music, dance, and other creative expressions. Also, some of these texts focus on a journey and some merely center place as central to identity and agency. Travel can happen between and among various social spheres, societal roles, and possibilities. I recognize that the works that are the focus of this book were not conceived as "travel writing," even broadly defined, however, I intentionally engage with different essential characteristics of the genre. Because women, especially third-world women, are often the object rather than the subject of these discourses, I argue that Indonesian women and their creative work require a rethinking of how travel and travel writing is imagined within global literature and performance.

The works I've selected to focus on in this book come from many different categories and time periods. Many of them are included in various "best of" lists for Indonesian fiction or films and were featured at various international literary festivals. They are grouped together because of their engagement with travel as a defining feature of the story and character development. I do not join in debates about whether one work is feminist or not,[12] but rather the frame of "trespassing" allows me to explore how women creators are breaking conventions of style and content. By emphasizing modes of travel I am shifting the focus from place to movement itself to investigate how they engage in a deeper exploration of the Indonesian female condition.

The women characters and authors in this book not only travel, they *trespass*. Trespassing foregrounds how women move between and among the borders of nation and home to imagine and claim alternative identities. Trespassing is travel of nonbelonging, across borders, and into forbidden spaces. I use the term intentionally to refer to both the societal norms and the legal realms that these Indonesian women are challenging in their work and lives. Trespassing does not depend on exotic difference, but rather allows the author, character, artist, and reader to encounter diverse worlds that destabilize identity and culture. In this book, I use trespassing to delve into how women subvert the genre

12 Feminism, and even gender, remain contentious topics within Indonesia and other parts of Southeast Asia because of its links to Western rather than local traditions and discourses. For example, see Chin and Mohd Daud 2017, 8.

of travel writing and re-orient it as a rebellious mode of expression.

My Body, Ethnography, and Literature

> Women must write though their bodies… (Cixous 1981, 256).

Trespassing boundaries is not only a conceptual framework, but also a method. This book challenges the ways that Indonesian performance and identity has typically been presented to the global public and scholars of history, politics, and culture. I challenge dichotomies by putting traditional performance, literature, film, and drama together to represent the way these art forms and artists exist within a dynamic society. I expand the categories of travel writing and works that feature travel by troubling the relationship between fiction and actual experiences in both the content and method of my writing. My readings of literature and film are informed by ethnography in several different ways. In two chapters, I examine how the reader is called to embodiment or performance by the text. In others I draw from and describe my own embodied experiences of dance and puppetry to better understand the content and imagery within the works. Finally, in others I weave my own experiences of travel to complement or complicate the stories I analyze. Throughout, each chapter explores a variety of narrative and performance techniques that reconfigure roles of author, character, scholar, and reader.

Women breaking boundaries and the role of the arts within Indonesian society have been major themes within my work. In my first book *Women in the Shadows: Gender, Puppets, and the Power of Tradition in Bali* (Ohio University Press, 2016),[13] funded by a Fulbright Fellowship to Indonesia, I applied my own experience of the practical training and ritual initiation to become a *dalang*, or puppeteer, coupled with interviews of early women *dalang* and leading artists to explore how women used and challenged "tradition" within the shadows of *wayang kulit*. This new project expands that ongoing ethnographic research to include analysis of novels, performances, film, and lives in the latter half of the twentieth century to the present. A primary contribution of this book will compel a rethinking of ways to understand women's creative

13 Now available open access: https://ohioopen.library.ohio.edu/oupress/115/

lives as productive agents of identity, the relationships between local and global, and how various media and traditions might be considered together through an ethnographic lens.

My work is interdisciplinary—that is, "a scholar in one field borrowing a concept or method from another field in order to add depth and complexity to the argument or conversation occurring in the scholar's home field" (Fenske 2007, 353). My central field is performance and I only came recently to the discipline of literary studies when I joined the department of Comparative Literature at Indiana University. My move had more to do with complex university politics than academic focus, but in this department I have been able to embrace internationality and interdisciplinarity. The move forced me to reconceptualize my methods and object of study—I am not only interested in the ways that literature might perform, but I employ an ethnographic and embodied approach to my analysis.[14] I explore how my own experience studying the performing arts in Indonesia allows me a beneficial vantage point for "reading" the ways that authors engage with the performance languages embedded within Indonesian cultural identity, especially dance and puppetry (*wayang kulit*).

When I read the texts discussed in this book through the lens of ethnography rooted in the practice of performance, it impacts the kinds of interpretations that are possible. My knowledge of *wayang kulit,* a type of Indonesian puppetry that features flat two-dimensional figures placed against a screen, changes how I understand the characters and events in literary works. For example, I feel that Barbara Hatley misreads some of the characters in the novels she analyzes for a 2002 book chapter in an edited volume examining women in Indonesia. Hatley contributed an insightful chapter on women's writing after *Reformasi*,[15] where she examines how women challenge common female archetypes in Indonesia—the "faithful wife, alluring but threatening temptress and

14 As I work on finalizing this manuscript, it is worth noting I have once again moved departments. This time I have returned to the Department of Theatre and Drama. I remain, however, influenced by the interdisciplinarity of Comparative Literature and imagine my focus and methods will continue to evolve.

15 *Reformasi* ("Reform Period") refers to the historical period in Indonesia right after Suharto's New Order (*Ordre Baru*) government ended in 1998. It was a period of transition into democracy that was characterized by a more open political and social environment.

monstrous widow-witch" (2002, 131). When I, unlike Hatley, look at the characters in the novels in relation to the aesthetics and characterizations of *wayang* or other classical dramatic forms, I find it less surprising to see sensitive demons in Ayu Utami's novels if compared to portrayals of Dimbi or other *raksasa* ("ogres") in *wayang* stories. The same goes for declaring that character of Saman is not a warrior-type because he is "small, thin, and not particularly prepossessing" (Hatley 2002, 135). These words may not describe the typical features of a warrior archetype in the West, but for Indonesia, Saman might read like Arjuna, who is similar in stature, but is one of the most powerful warriors in the *Mahabharata*.

The gender dynamics between character and actor in many performances also would add depth to Hatley's analysis. For example, she examines several new adaptations of the Balinese ritual-myth *Calonarang*. Whether part of a temple ritual or tourist performance, *Calonarang* dramatizes the story of the grotesque widow-witch Rangda and ends in a climax battle between Rangda and the Barong. Hatley describes a subversive performance of Rangda by Cok Sawitri (136–137) and makes a comparison between the performance and the election campaign of Indonesia's first female president, Megawati Sukarnoputri.[16] Hatley ignores that in Bali, Rangda is only portrayed by men because the character contains so much dangerous spiritual power. This presents an opportunity for another layer of analysis because both Cok Sawitri and Megawati are stepping into "male" roles.

Finally, although Hatley's exploration of the novel *Tarian Bumi*, or *Earth Dance* by Oka Rusmini (which I examine in Chapter 3) provides insight into the relationships between gender and caste in Bali. Hatley misses, however, the importance of dance to the events and aesthetics of the story. This omission leaves out an important element to the story. To be clear, my purpose here is not to discredit the excellent work of scholars like Hatley, but rather I want to emphasize how an embodied reading of these texts informed by performance enriches or alters the

16 Often referred to as just Megawati, she was the daughter of Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, and was in office from 2001-2004. She ran again in 2004 and 2009 but was not elected. Her success might be attributed to hereditary power from her father, even though critics maintained this was an inappropriate role for a woman.

possible readings Indonesian texts offer.

Throughout this book, I use my body to both create and reflect meaning. I identify as white, middle-aged, educated, financially secure, globally curious, athletic and able,[17] cis-female lesbian, and I lean into the differences between not only myself and the authors, but also their intended Indonesian readers to offer critical insight into how meaning travels. I draw on my extensive knowledge of Indonesian language, culture, and history to elucidate the meanings within the texts—but emphasizing the body and performance through ethnography and various approaches to writing allows me to explore how meaning is multiple and globally situated.

Just like trespassing foregrounds conceptions of movement as constant, I use the term *performance* to describe both the texts[18] I am studying and my method of analysis. The idea that performance is both an object and method of analysis is not new, but not common within literary studies, which focuses on the text.[19] Words on the page, however, invoke images, feelings, sounds, senses—meaning often resides within the body of the reader, not just the intellect as an isolated phenomenon. Diana Taylor writes that, "embodied practice, along with and bound up with other cultural practices, offers a way of knowing" (Taylor 2003, 3). She then continues to explain that "performances travel, challenging and influencing other performances. Yet they are, in a sense, always in situ: intelligible in the framework of the immediate environment and issues surrounding them. The *is/as* underlines the understanding of performance as simultaneously 'real' and 'constructed,' as practices that bring together what have historically been kept separate as discrete, supposedly free-standing, ontological and epistemological discourses"

17 Even though, at this writing, I am fifty-one years old, I play roller derby for two teams in Indianapolis, IN.

18 I want to clarify that I am using "text" to mean the object of study in the expansive sense common to the discipline of Comparative Literature. A text can be a song, novel, poem, film, or object—or even a room, statue, garden, or city. Many of the works I examine in this book are "texts" in the traditional sense of words on a page; others are not. Throughout this work I will emphasize medial differences and similarities by alternating between text, creative works, performance, and other designations. My word selection is always intentional, even within any supposed inconsistencies.

19 Of course, performance studies is present within literary studies, but more often understood as the oral interpretation of the text. I am interested instead primarily on the body instead of the elocution of the text.

(Taylor 2003, 3 emphasis in the original). Informed by this interpretation of performance, I likewise highlight the movement of these texts from local and global, and back again. As I do so, I wish to center my own body and the subjective, yet insightful, nature of literary criticism (that, of course, is again reconfigured as the words you are reading on the page). I also recognize the role of technology and industrialization in creating different opportunities for globalized movement. My hope is that my work invites my readers to similarly wander away from this text and experience Indonesian literature, theatre, or film for themselves; perhaps even crossing borders and visiting Indonesia.

Overview of Chapters

> The history of man's progress through the ages is linked intimately to the development and improvement of his many means of transportation (Bernardo 1960, 19).

Technologies of travel become technologies of trespassing. I have thus organized the chapters of the sections of this book by types of travel: by foot, by train, by boat, and by plane. My linking emphasizes not the machines of travel, but how the characters and people in each section experience and trespass within and across. Within the chapters, themes, ideas, and background information might repeat from one to the next. I have left several of these in so not only will each chapter stand on its own, but also to allow chapters and ideas to speak among and across. I am inspired by how Carl Phillips describes repetition from one chapter to the next:

> as the context in which these points reappear changes, the effect will be not redundancy but something more akin to those notes and chords that, in music, make up the motif that returns at various points across a composition to provide structure, the patterning without which music would be mere noise (2022, 3).

Throughout, I also introduce the book's authors to emphasize the importance of real global travel to the reception of their work and in their lives.

The first section focuses on travel by foot, the most basic method of human locomotion. These women travel not only around the world, but

also through time and identity. In the first chapter, Intan Paramaditha's adult "choose-your-own-adventure" novel *Gentayangan: Pilih Sendiri Petualangan Sepatu Merahmu* (*The Wandering: Choose Your Own Red-Shoes Adventure*) establishes the duality of home and not-home that carries throughout the rest of my book when the main character dons red shoes and travels the world. She resists the oppression of "home" by never finding a place to rest; she is forever wandering. In contrast, the women in the novel *Tarian Bumi* (*Earth Dance*) by Oka Rusmini remain on Bali, but as they move from one caste to another through marriage, these women cross entire worlds. Their feet in dance gives them power; travel makes them strange.

Trains are the mode of locomotion that frames the stories in this next section because they represent not only a trip across the land, but also an inward journey or a collective desire to escape. Indonesia's only major railway crosses the island of Java—but the works analyzed here evoke the view from trains to explore how women trespass the rules of society. Transgender women, lesbians, and murderers are the characters in the films *Anak Anak Srikandi* (*Children of Srikandi*) and *Marlina Si Pembunuh dalam Empat Babak* (*Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts*). Together, the story and imagery within the films depend on travel for women to escape their oppression, but they never settle at a home. Both films also depended upon international collaborations and audiences, another layer to how travel stories make worlds for women.

For a nation made of thousands of islands, boats provide essential means of connection and livelihood. Boats also brought colonialism. In this section, stories about ships and boats mean voyages, discovery, and danger. Boats are the vehicle to carry dreams of finding love in the novel *Perahu Kertas* (*Paper Boats*) by Dee Lestari. Boats in the play *Dapur* (*The Kitchen*) by Luna Vidya (based on the short story by Lilly Yulinanti Farid) and the song "Gunung Salahutu/'O Honolulu Ku'u Home" by Vanessa Alputila offer a promise of a new life in a new land.

The book's final mode of transportation is the airplane. Around the world, planes serve as representations of modernity and progress. The ability to manufacture its own planes also symbolized an important moment for Indonesia as a global power. In this section, the novel *Keberangkatan* (*Departures*) by Nh. Dini in one chapter is contrasted with the novel *Pulang* (*Home*) by Leila S. Chudori in the next. These stories

reveal the tension found within ideas of a "home/land." Airplanes and airports function as an in-between, almost liminal, space that women who trespass find themselves inhabiting.

The postscript at the end considers the short story "Kemukus" (*Meteors*) by Clara Ng. In it, a human woman, Cen, lives on another planet with Tiansun. But unlike Tiansun's, a creature with many eyes, Cen's life is short; Tiansun can live for many hundreds of years longer. But Cen teaches Tiansun about a beauty through language that endures until all that is left behind is a ticking watch and their daughter. There is both longing and a deep sense of home in the strange galactic realm for Cen. In the conclusion, I use this story as a basis to bring together the different types and consequences of travel. *Meteors* suggests a hope for the future that lies within the imagination of women artists and authors that lies beyond place, but within words and gesture.

Notes on Language and Translation

In 2023, I attended the Ubud Readers and Writers Festival. This international literary festival began twenty years ago to foster healing in Bali after the 2002 Bali Bombs that targeted a night club in Kuta. The bombs not only killed many people but silenced the tourism that the island depends on for economic survival. The festival features Indonesian and international authors together to raise awareness of Indonesian literature as world literature.

In a panel called "Women Shaping Indonesian Literature," authors Intan Paramaditha, Dee Lestari, and Lala Bohang talked about their struggles and triumphs as authors.[20] They described how language, English or Indonesian, was important in the creation and reception of their work. Bohang thought that writing in English gave her more freedom to say things she might not be able to express in Indonesian. She "drew courage writing in English to become an Indonesian writer." Paramaditha writes as a scholar in English, but her short stories and novels are in Indonesian. She explained, "it is a political choice to write in Indonesian because it is a very new language, and some people

20 Many of the conversations from the festival are available at https://www.ubudwritersfestival.com/media

feel confined saying it has a limited vocabulary compared to Spanish or English." But Paramaditha embraces Indonesian as a "beautiful challenge," she "wants to write first and foremost for Indonesian people." Even so, Paramaditha expressed awareness that her works will be translated and therefore she keeps in mind how her work will be received by non-Indonesian audiences as well.

In this book I want to emphasize the global and multilingual aspects of women's creative work. Most of the literature, drama, and film included in here are available in English translation (although I work with both the translations and the Indonesian originals). I focus on works available in translation because it is not only central to the global dimension of my argument, but I seek to introduce these authors and artists to my readers. It is my sincere hope that not only will this book add to knowledge about women and creativity in Indonesia, but inspire others interested in women's literature and film to explore the rich world of Indonesian art and culture.

One final word on language—this book draws from various sources and time periods that use Javanese, Balinese, and Indonesian. Systems for spelling have changed over time and I use the most current unless quoting directly from another source. I give my readers the Indonesian names of works and use Indonesian words for important terms and ideas. All of these are in Indonesian unless it is obvious or otherwise indicated. I never did well with spelling in school, so I beg the reader to be patient with any mistakes in spelling or translation.

BY FOOT

1. Forever Wandering

> You are sitting in a taxi, no longer in Jakarta, but traveling through New York City to the JFK airport to catch a flight to Berlin. You are not sure how you got here. The entire last year, since you accepted the gift of the red shoes from *Iblis Kekasih*, the lover demon, with their promise to travel the world, is lost to your memory. Then you look down to find one shoe is missing. What do you do? Do you decide to cancel your trip and return home (wherever that is)? Turn to the next page. Do you go to the police to report the lost shoe? Turn to page 29. Do you keep going to the airport and on to Berlin? Turn to page 33.[1]

So begins the adventure within Intan Paramaditha's novel *Gentayangan: Pilih Sendiri Petualangan Sepatu Merahmu* (*The Wandering: Choose Your Own Red Shoes Adventure*).[2] This adult "choose-your-own-adventure" novel follows the journey of a restless twenty-something living in Jakarta. She had majored in English literature with her father's approval because English was an international and worldly language. However, she failed to secure admission to a good university or win a scholarship abroad. Consequently, she settled for a course in teaching English as a

1 I have summarized the events in the opening of the novel—the options in Indonesian are: *Jika kau ingin membatalkan perjalananmu dan kembali ke rumahmu di New York* (*di mana pun itu*) *buka halaman selanjutnya. Jika kau ingin melaporkan kehilanganmu ke kantor polisi, buka halaman 29. Jika kau meneruskan perjalananmu ke Berlin, buka halaman 33.* Intan Paramaditha, *Gentayangan: Pilih Sendiri Petualangan Sepatu Merahmu* (Jakarta: Kompas Gramedia, 2017).

2 The author Intan Paramaditha is a writer, scholar, cultural critic, and activist. She was born in Indonesia, but received her PhD from New York University and is currently Senior Lecturer in Media and Film Studies at Macquarie University, Sydney. *Gantayangan* is her first novel, but she has won numerous awards for her short stories, essays, and academic research. *The Wandering* was published in Indonesia in 2017 where it won the Tempo Best Literary Work for Prose Fiction. The English translation was done by Stephen J. Epstein and published in 2020. It has won PEN Translates Award and Heim Translation Fund Grant from PEN America. The novel has attained international attention, and other translations are in the works.

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foreign language, leading to a dead-end job. Her social life was similarly dismal, confined to a crowded boarding house with few amenities. Additionally, she disappointed her family, because unlike her sister, she was not yet married with children. In a moment of ennui, she strikes a Faustian-like deal with the devil, trading her soul for a pair of red shoes that take her to diverse destinations worldwide. In the novel, travel and adventure enable her to trespass away from neo-liberal values of "hard work" and the impending boredom of "domestic bliss" as a wife and mother. She ignores the devil's warning that after accepting the shoes, she will never be able to come home; she will be destined to forever wander. Her adventures demonstrate how travel becomes an escape from societal expectations placed on women within the borders of the Indonesian nation—and how it is a choice of no return.

Inherent in narratives of travel are also moments of self-actualization and discovery. In an interview, the author Paramaditha considers the role of travel for the people in her home third-world (her term) country, Indonesia. Travel was something accessible to only the privileged elite. During the Dutch occupation, only foreigners were able to journey to and from the island. During her childhood, global travel was a sign of wealth and privilege; for her, even Singapore seemed to be a faraway dreamland. Additionally, Paramaditha further observes that travel often had a gendered element in Indonesia. Women stayed at home, while men had access to move around the archipelago, or even to education abroad. Thus when they are able, travel empowers women to trespass against history, society, and global hierarchies.

In this chapter I am going to focus on describing actions of trespassing to analyze how *The Wandering* challenges the relationship between gender and nation that is central within Indonesia. Typically, the borders of nation like the dichotomy of gender lend themselves to an either-or framework; Mary Louise Pratt calls these borders "contact zones" which reveal "the often highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (2008, 7). Paramaditha's novel, however, articulates a more complex dynamic between gender and nation than are reflected in the idea of contact zones and by centering travel, I propose to represent this interaction conceptually as islands. These islands, however, like the construct of the nation, are not adequate to contain the feminine identities that authors like Paramaditha work to articulate. Islands

construct binaries that in the context of the nation might be seen as binaries of citizenry and gender (Stratford et al. 2011, 115). Inspired by the geography of Indonesia, I use the framework of the archipelago to analyze how shifts in time, place, and character trespass across gender norms. Moving beyond a simple land-versus-sea binary, the archipelago allows for a far more complex and fluid arrangement. An archipelago is an accidental grouping by nature given meaning through human intervention and culture. As an analytical framework, the archipelago offers a means to examine "the ways in which space and time are resignified" by calling for "a meaning-making and rearticulation that responds to human experiences traversing space and time" (Martínez-San and Stephens 2020, 3).

Archipelagic studies emerged from the interdisciplinary field of island studies to provide a framework for understanding phenomena that transcend binary distinctions often inherent in insular formations. Despite a rather obvious connection between insular Southeast Asia (which includes Malaysia, Brunei, East Timor, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines) and the archipelago, only recently has this conceptual framework emerged as a distinct way of thinking (or theorizing) within Southeast Asian Studies (2023, 430). In literature, thinking with the archipelago has created an "emancipatory cartography" that challenges stasis with movement (Redd 2017, 303) because archipelagos emphasize fluidity and creativity (Pugh 2013, 10). Archipelagos replace the closed-system of islands by focusing on "an open system of relationships among islands" and continents (Thompson 2017, 61). Furthermore, archipelagos have offered a novel point of departure for understanding systems of power, especially relating to gender and sexuality (Karides 2017, 36). Thinking with the archipelago therefore offers a distinct approach to understand how Paramaditha engages with travel as an emancipatory force.

Gender and feminist studies, however, have long recognized the need to develop specific language regarding women's experiences within Western and Eastern, or developed and undeveloped nations.[3] Is there a way to think through the archipelago in a specifically Indonesian manner? I find an answer to this question with the term *nusantara*,

3 For more, see Narayan 2013 or Mohanty, Talpade, and Torres 1991.

which roughly means "archipelago" in Malay or Indonesian. *Nusantara* introduces a compelling linguistic formation to introduce an Indonesian point-of-view to archipelagic thinking. There are multiple uses and interpretations of the term *nusantara* that are useful to my analysis. The word *nusantara* is taken from Sanskrit—*nusa* means "island" and *antara* means "in between" or "including." The term *nusantara* dates from the fourteenth century, and throughout its history has been taken to have different meanings and qualities, especially within the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Evans 2016, 4). Historian Bernhard B. Vlekke explains that *nusantara* once meant "the other islands," from the perspective of Bali or Java (two of Indonesia's main islands in terms of culture, tourism, population, and politics) or even "the outside world" or "abroad" (1958, 400). By layering *nusantara* onto my use of the archipelago to frame my analysis, I focus on how various events, motifs, characters, and strategies of the novel write women as always in between, always placeless.

The history of the term *nusantara* speaks to the East/West divide that has centered my exploration of Indonesian modernity. In the 1920s, *Nusantara* emerged as an alternative name for the soon-to-be-formed country of Indonesia, because some worried the word Indonesia was too "foreign." The name "Indonesia" was originally coined by J. R. Logan in 1850 as a purely geographical term, a shortened name for the Indian islands or the Indian Archipelago (Avé 1989, 222). It eventually became commonly used among anthropologists, historians, and linguists in the Netherlands at the turn of the century to refer not only to the Dutch East Indies, but Indonesia also "covered populations speaking related languages and possessing certain cultural characteristics in common," which included the Philippines, and other peoples in Mainland Southeast Asia and even Taiwan (Avé 1989, 224). Early native nationalists came across and adapted the term Indonesia while attending university in Leiden, because "it encapsulated the concept of a people with common cultural roots, related languages, and shared historical experiences... Thus, the political concept of 'Indonesia' came into being" (Avé 1989, 226). But others resisted adapting the "foreign" term, Indonesia, to name the new nation. Ki Hajar Dewantara, a pivotal activist and pioneer of education, advocated instead for *Nusantara*. He felt this term, with its origins in Old Javanese manuscripts better met the aim of "the creation

of the modern Indonesian person preserving his/her own national identity" (Avé 1988, 231). Nonetheless, the name Indonesia persisted.

Nusantara is now used to name history books, buildings, restaurants, and other things Indonesian both inside and outside the nation. In 2022, Indonesia announced it was moving the capital city from Jakarta to a new city that will be built on East Kalimantan; the new capital will be named *Nusantara*. Soon after the announcement, the BBC reported "The planning minister said the capital's new name was chosen by the president because it reflected Indonesia's geography and was iconic internationally" (2022). Thus the term *nusantara* emphasizes the complex history of Indonesia's modernity.

Nusantara does more than bring Indonesian thinking into my analysis, rather, it enables the global. Indonesian literary scholar Paulus Sarowoto, in his analysis of different approaches to study modern Indonesian literature, cautions against an overreliance on Western theory to understand texts from a very different cultural context. But on the other hand, he also recognizes that completely dismissing all other existing (Western) theories would limit and isolate Indonesian artists and academics. Sarowoto concludes that, "Indonesian discourse on modernity has a distinctive trajectory, and it is the discourse emanating from this trajectory that shall contribute to and help situate the discourse within existing [Western and Eastern] academic conversation" (2018, 287). It is clear that *nusantara*, historically and conceptually, encompasses such large areas with "shifting boundaries" (Evers 2016, 6). Today *nusantara* might mean "Indonesia" or the "Malay World," depending whether one is in Indonesia or Malaysia, and this distinction is contested. Some definitions expand the meaning of *nusantara* to include any areas subject to Malay/Indonesian influence, within and outside of Southeast Asia. Other historians and cultural academics, in Europe and the United States, debate about the proper uses of the term (Evers 2016, 8). *Nusantara* is a homeland, it is travel, it is other, it is outside, but it is also still Indonesia. Additionally, the use of emic terms such as *nusantara* provides a model for expanding the critical language of island and archipelago studies to include Asian and globally Asian voices such as Intan Paramaditha. Throughout I will draw from these various conceptions of archipelago and *nusantara* together and in contrast.

A Few Notes on Method

The content and structure of *The Wandering* allow the reader to experience trespassing by connecting text to performance. The structure of *The Wandering* was inspired by the "choose-your-own-adventure" novels that were first published by Bantam Books in 1979.[4] In the novel, the reader, through the main character, you (*kau*),[5] is presented with options and directed to different pages based on her[6] decisions, leading to multiple possible endings. This format allows for a highly personalized and immersive reading experience, as the reader's choices directly influence the outcome. In *The Wandering*, the protagonist's morals, actions, career, and ideas undergo dynamic transformations based on the reader's choice of storyline. The content of the novel, like Paramaditha's other works,[7] is inspired by Indonesian myth, Western fairytales, and global literary and popular culture.

The reader "performs" the story, and her body is inserted into the novel through the choices she makes. The choose-your-own-adventure structure of *The Wandering* demands an interplay between reader and text that exceeds the boundaries of the pages. It is written in second-person, activating the reader in the role of the "you" of the main character. This use of "you" is vital to the author's style and intent; in an interview Paramaditha explains, "It's a novel about travel, and therefore it made sense to use a forking-path narrative structure, because when we travel we always ask: what if I had chosen that path? What about the road not taken? This structure allows the reader to see different versions of themselves on different paths, meeting different characters" (Figge 2020). Likewise, when I paraphrase from the novel I will use the second person. I recognize this is a departure from typical academic style, but in deference to the archipelago as a frame, I wish to challenge the safety of

4 For more about the history and style of "choose-your-own-adventure" novels, see Jamison (2022).

5 Like many languages, Indonesian has several variants of the pronoun for "you" based on the status between the speaker and the listener. *Kau* is primarily used for literary purposes, rarely in spoken Indonesian, and does not indicate a specific rank or gender.

6 Throughout, I use she/her pronouns to refer to the reader of the novel. Because the reader becomes the performer of the main character, the reader becomes "she," regardless of their gender identity.

7 For an excellent example of how Paramaditha entwines Western and Indonesian myths and fairytales through a gothic horror and a feminist sensibility, see Paramaditha's *Apple and Knife* (2018).

scholarly objectivity. I want to invite "you," the readers of this chapter, in as meaning-making subjects, and in doing so, I join other academics experimenting with ways to "disrupt presentational modes that position arguments as finished and monologic" (Sterner and Fisher 2020, 66).

I invoke the contrast between islands and archipelagos in the structure of the rest of this chapter—it is difficult to write about a novel that has so many different possibilities. I don't want to pretend a chronology, cohesion, or closure when there strategically is not one. I am going to structure this chapter into various islands, or themes/ideas. In doing so I engage with the actual islandness of Indonesia and the insular as a conceptual space where I invite you, the reader, to also look in between, within, and outside in assembling these islands into an archipelago of meaning.

Island #1: Bad Girls Wander

Paramaditha activates travel as a mode of trespassing with the notion of "wandering", or *gentayangan*. As the taxi races to the airport, so fast it makes you nauseous:

> He moves to pass a 1970s Jaguar with faded green paint and rust holes filled with putty. A sticker in the rear window reads *Good girls go to heaven, bad girls go everywhere*. As you hurtle past, the cabbie glances at the driver, an elderly woman whose curls are flying about in the wind. "Ha, Granny..." His long sigh expresses a mixture of annoyance and empathy. "I hope she makes it to heaven."
>
> *Good girls go to heaven*.
>
> Good girls go to heaven, bad girls—
>
> Go wandering? (*Wandering*, 10).[8]

8 *Ia berusaha menyalip mobil di depannya, sebuah Jaguar tahun 70-an bercat hijau pudar dan penuh dempul. Kaca mobil bagian belakang ditempeli stiker bertuliskan* Good girls go to heaven, bad girls go everywhere. *Saat melewati mobil itu si sopir sempat mengintip ke arah pengemudi, seorang perempuan lanjut usia dengan rambut keriting berkibar.*

"Hah, nenek-nenek," ia menghela nafsa panjang, antara kesal dan maklum. "Semoga dia masuk surga."

Good girls go to heaven.

Cewik baik masuk surga, cewek bandel—

Gentayangan? (*Gentayangan*, 11).

In the Indonesian version, the narrator must, in her head, translate the English word "everywhere" of the sticker into *gentayangan*, or "wandering." In doing so, she challenges the East/West power paradigm[9] within travel by replacing the place of "everywhere" with the placelessness of "wandering." The juxtaposition of these two words mirrors the contrast of island and archipelago. The word "everywhere" suggests multiple destinations and places; it is a word of empire and power. Michel Foucault proclaims, "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (1976, 93). The power of "everywhere," like that of the West, is therefore relational and absolute.

In contrast, "wandering" means ever-moving, there is not an end, and the act is uncertain. The Indonesian word *gentayangan* further emphasizes placelessness and is often used in reference to a wandering spirit or ghost that has no rest or home.[10] Paramaditha's description of *gentayangan* invokes the meaning of *nusantara*, she says *gentayangan* is the persistent state of "in between" (Figge 2020). Placelessness, however, is not a position of subordination. Inspired by the works of Michel de Certeau—Claire Omhovère and Pascale Tollance interpret placelessness as an active strategy of resistance in post-colonial short stories. They write, "Placelessness is then not to be conceived as the negation of place, but as a disruptive force that challenges the fiction of stability and property" (2020, 3–4). By translating "everywhere" into "*gentayangan*," Paramaditha destabilizes the locus of power; "Not everyone has the privilege to perceive the world [as small and connected]," she explains. "For some, even domestic travel is a luxury. For undocumented migrants who have traveled, the world still feels disconnected and their mobility is limited because they cannot go abroad or return home" (Figge 2020). Paramaditha's novel goes beyond exposing these limits, she enables the Indonesian (woman) reader to experience the subversive travel of

9 I am familiar with the problems within the construction of East/West. My use of the terms is intentional and Paramaditha herself echoes them in interviews and writing. She uses terms like the West and third-world in order to name inequalities. For more on this dynamic within travel and travel writing, see the Introduction of this book.

10 The association of *gentayangan* with a ghost would be particularly pronounced in Indonesia due to the release of the 2018 Indonesian horror film bearing the same title.

trespassing. *Gentayangan*, like *nusantara*, holds multiple meanings and possibilities; they are words of expanse rather than words of limitation.

How does the novel invoke placelessness as an emancipatory idea for Indonesian women? The answer lies within the location of the bumper sticker: it is on a 1970s Jaguar. After Suharto came into power in 1967, ushering in the period of *Ordre Baru*, or the "New Order," several significant policies were passed concerning the position of women within Indonesian society. First was the creation of the *Baden Kependudukan dan Keluarga Berencana Nasional* ("The National Family Planning Coordinating Board"), or BKKBN, to implement and oversee planning policies to limit family size, which reinforced traditional gender roles by promoting the image of women primarily as mothers. The 1974 marriage law further differentiated roles of men and women within the family; it codified the idea that the husband is the head of the household, and the wife is responsible for managing domestic affairs. These various policies became known as State Ibuism[11] and created a legal foundation for the idea that women should follow their *kodrat* ("nature") as good wives and mothers. These various policies and ideas, even today, establish women's place as within the home and domestic sphere. Therefore, the "placelessness" of *gentayangan*, as stated in the bumper sticker, offers the possibility to escape the 1970's definition of women's "place."

Further, the division of "good" vs. "bad" women is the essential paradigm for feminine identity in Indonesia that encompasses religious, cultural, and political spheres. Paramaditha challenges this "good" identity and connects travel, or "wandering" as a kind of hope for the bad woman. It is important to note that in the Indonesian context, that the bad is not evil. Rather, "bad" is a woman who breaks with society's expectations and instead makes her own path. For example, Paramaditha contrasts the main character with the character's sister and friends who follow the socially approved path of education, career, marriage, and family. The main character, you, on the other hand, fall short on all

11 The term "State Ibuism" has become common to describe these various laws, policies, and social norms that emphasized the role of women as wives and mothers. Ibu is the Indonesian word for mother, but is also used as a common address or honorific similar to "Mrs." The term "State Ibuism" was first coined by Julia Suryakusuma (2011).

accounts. Not only that, you have nightly sex with a demon—you are very, very bad. The place of the home traps good women, placelessness allows women the freedom to be bad. In the novel, wandering is an escape from societal expectations placed on women within the borders of the Indonesian nation. Wandering moves women from the confines of the island and into the between spaces of *nusantara*. Travel enables this freedom and becomes trespassing.

The main character in the novel, "you," longs for autonomy and excitement. You did not want the "safe" kind of success your friends, and even your sister had. You didn't want your success to be defined by the place you worked, by religion, or by the man you married. You didn't want to be bound by *man jadda wajada,* Arabic for "the earnest will succeed." But, "you didn't know what you wanted, apart from not wanting to be yourself" (*Wandering*, 15).[12] When the Demon Lover (*Iblis Kekasih*) appears, he is a welcome rescue from your trapped life. At first, sex with him provides a physical release, but you soon grow bored and ask him to grant you a one-way ticket to adventure. He warns, if you go you will never be able to come home, you will be destined to forever wander. You don't care; you put on the red shoes as instructed to indicate you have accepted his terms.

Sex with a demon did not satisfy, and Paramaditha maps her hope for women's agency onto the notion of travel writing. Semi-autobiographical travel writing was popular in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. Literary scholar Mary Louise Pratt examines the imperial history of these and how travel writing seeks to make the world accessible to those at "home." Travel books, "gave European reading publics a sense of ownership, entitlement and familiarity with respect to the distant part of the world that were being explored, invaded, invested in, and colonized." Pratt argues that travel writing reinforced the concept of the nation/home and creates the "domestic subject" of Empire (Pratt 2008, 3). Historically, travel writing narrates the stories of those in the dominant class who can travel to the faraway places of the subordinate class. The narrator, and reader, in *The Wandering*, through her gender and her nationality, turns this paradigm on its head by traveling from the third-world to places such as Paris, New York, and Berlin.

12 *Kau tidak tahu apa keinginanmu. tapi bisa dipastikan kau tak mau menjadi dirimu sekerang.* (*Gentayangan, 18.*)

Conventional travel writing tends to perpetuate the divisive concepts of "us" versus "them," or even the binary notions of "male" and "female," reinforcing the dichotomy of the island. However, in *The Wandering*, Paramaditha goes beyond merely reversing the traditional relationship between embarkation and destination. Much like the concept of *nusantara*, she skillfully blurs the distinctions of identity and place. No matter the mode of travel, ranging from taxis and airplanes to trains and even a spaceship, it is her feet, the red shoes that make this wandering possible. Significantly, typical travel narratives seldom revolve around the final destination; the reader is left uncertain about the journey's endpoint or origin. Instead, the focus lies on the transformative power of travel itself and the profound discoveries that unfold in the spaces between one destination and the next. "Good girls go to heaven, bad girls go everywhere" thus becomes a refrain that is repeated, like a victory chant, throughout the novel.

Island #2: Weaving Together East/West through Story

Paramaditha intricately weaves travel into the fabric of *The Wandering* by incorporating stories from diverse corners of the world. This global intertextuality stands as a recurring element in Paramaditha's body of work, where she frequently integrates Western folk stories, literature, and film with Indonesian myth. In Gema Charmaine Gonzales' insightful analysis on Paramaditha's short stories, she notes that this approach allows Paramaditha to "dislodge the unidimensional imaginaries of female bodies in urmyths, highlight female experience in local society, and reclaim subversive spaces where female bodies may regain agency" (2020, 81–82). Gonzales characterizes Paramaditha's engagement with various "myths" as a form of revision, underlining the transformative nature of how Paramaditha retells these stories. [13]

In *The Wandering*, the use of both Western and Indonesian tales uniquely enables movement that becomes trespassing. Paramaditha employs intertextuality not only to facilitate intellectual exploration

13 Unlike her academic and critical work, which Paramaditha writes in mostly English, her fiction is written in Indonesian and thus targeted for a local audience. Paramaditha does not translate the stories herself, but works closely with the translator Stephen J. Epstein.

but also to enable physical travel across a global archipelago. Much like the book's main character, the stories themselves remain in a constant state of flux, susceptible to change. There is no singular *a priori* text or fixed identity, emphasizing the fluid and dynamic nature of both the narratives and the characters within the novel.

This strategic utilization of stories and myths to shape and question identity aligns with widespread practices of myth in Southeast Asia. It is often argued that throughout island nations like Indonesia, myths, legends, and narratives serve as vehicles through which people can envision their world on a grander scale. For example, Epeli Hau'Ofa writes about myth and identity in the Pacific Islands:

> Their universe comprised not only of land surfaces, but the surrounding ocean as far as they could traverse and exploit it, the underworld with its fire-controlling and earth-shaking denizens, and the heavens above with their hierarchies of powerful gods and names stars and constellations that people could count on to guide their ways across the seas. Their world was anything but tiny (1994, 152).

Paramaditha's incorporation of Indonesian stories in the novel establishes a connection between the narrative and its characters with a distinctly Indonesian imagination. This engagement resists insularity, contributing to a broader and more inclusive perspective that transcends boundaries and invites a diverse range of influences.

Paramaditha does not limit her sources to Indonesia, but draws heavily from Western, especially American, tales and genres. In doing so she collapses hierarchies between East and West as well as highbrow and lowbrow texts. In part, this reflects Paramaditha's own life as a global nomad, who was born in Indonesia, earned her PhD in film studies at New York University, and now teaches in Australia. She writes her fiction in Indonesian for an Indonesian reader, but is always aware that her work will be translated and therefore must be legible for a global readership.[14] These types of intertextual/intercultural exchanges reveal "the contested, unsettling, and often unequal spaces *between* cultures, spaces that can function in performance [or literature] as sites

14 The tactic of writing with future translation in mind was explained by Paramaditha at the 2023 Ubud Readers and Writers Festival which the author of this article attended.

of negotiation" (Knowles 2010, 4). The different cultures represented in the many stories that Paramaditha uses allows the reader to travel around a kind of global archipelago that continually interrogates cultural gaps. Through the narrator, the cosmopolitan Indonesian woman reader wanders.

Some of the intertextual elements offer a detour that also centers travel. One of these stories is the tale of "Malin Kundang, the Disobedient Child" (*Malin Kundang si Anak Durhaka*). This Malay myth has versions throughout Southeast Asia and is tied to Muslim identity.[15] The chapter opens by connecting the myth directly to the narrator's identity: "Your ancestors were sailors. Travel is the most ancient human desire, and, being a traveler, Malin Kundang had fidelity issues" (*Wandering*, 23).[16] Paramaditha first briefly describes the original story—Milan Kundang has a devoted mother, but he leaves her to sail around the world in order to seek his fortune. Eventually, after marrying a beautiful woman, he returns home to his mother. Milan Kundang, however, is shocked by how poor his home seems after he has experienced the riches of the world. Embarrassed, he denies knowing his mother because he is ashamed by her poverty. His mother curses him, and Milan Kundang turns to stone. For many, the moral of the story is the importance of never forgetting to honor one's mother.

Paramaditha complicates the story to turn it into a fable of *gentayangan*. In her version, Milan Kundang is unable to settle or find peace as he travels from place to place and woman to woman, "and it is a given that travel always changes someone" (*Wandering*, 23),[17] the story warns. In Paramaditha's version, the disappointment is with his home village, not his mother. Milan Kundang is excited to return home, but when he finally does, "his old village was no longer large enough to accommodate his longings" (*Wandering*, 24).[18] It was not possible for Milan Kundang to bring his village along on adventures, but it was also miserable for him to remain in one place. Thus, Paramaditha acknowledges to her reader that to seek adventure outside one's own

15 For more on how this story is tied to Southeast Asian identity see Goodlander 2018.

16 *Nenek moyangmu seorang pelaut. Bepergian adalah hasrat manusia paling purba. Dan sebagaimana pengelana, Malin Kundang punya masalah dengan kesetiaan* (*Gentayangan*, 27).

17 *Dan tentu saja perjalanan selalu mengubah sesorang* (*Gentayangan*, 27).

18 *Kampung itu tak cukup lagi untuk menampungnya. Ia merasa pedih* (*Gentayangan*, 28).

island, or the confines of traditional gender roles, is an unsettled journey where it becomes impossible to return home. Many of the key motifs and stories within the novel likewise heighten its focus on the global through intertextuality.

Island #3: Red Shoes

The Demon Lover invites you to state your desire, and you respond, "My sole wish is to get the hell away from here. I want adventure. Give me money, visas, and a one-way ticket. I don't want to come back" (*Wandering*, 4).[19] Reluctantly he agrees to grant your wish and the next day you wake up to find a pair of glittering red shoes with a note that explains putting the shoes on your feet indicates you agree to the terms: "Adventure, or more precisely, wandering, will be your eternal lot. You will find shelter, but never home" (*Wandering*, 7).[20]

The red shoes serve as a poignant symbol, directing attention to the dynamic movements within the archipelago, mirroring the dual and paradoxical nature of the island's significance. In the realm of fairytales, movies, and narratives, literary scholar Linda Rohrer Paige interprets the red shoes as "a sign of the female imagination—capable of signaling life (imagination) or death (repressed imagination)" (1996, 147). Transitioning from the literary landscape to the streets, fashion scholar Elaine Webster engaged with women who embraced red shoes as part of their attire. Their responses not only resonated with the transformative potential associated with the red shoes but also unveiled red as a symbol of rebellion against the constraints of propriety and convention. Moreover, many associated red shoes with the stereotype of a "loose woman" (2009, 171). Webster concludes that due to these conflicting meanings, the red shoes signify "a symbolically rich participation in the desire for more life, a bigger life than the one we currently have" (2009, 173). Red shoes beckon an archipelagic response to the limitations of the bad/good dichotomy for women by embodying multiple potentials simultaneously.

19 *Satu-satunya yang kuinginkan adalah pergi dari sini dan bertualang. Beri aku uang, visa, dan tiket. Sekali jalan. Aku tak mau pulang* (*Gentayangan*, 4).

20 *Kau terkutuk untuk bertualang, atau lebih tepatnya, gentayangan. Bernauang, tapi tak berumah* (*Gentayangan*, 7).

The red shoes in *The Wandering* carry a strategic association with the iconic ruby slippers from the 1939 film adaptation *The Wizard of Oz*.[21] The accompanying letter from Demon Lover clarifies that these enchanted shoes originate from a long-deceased witch (*perempuan sihir*). To reinforce the connection with Oz, the novel also guides the reader to brief summaries of the film, particularly focusing on Judy Garland's portrayal. Additionally, other red shoe stories, such as Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale "The Red Shoes" and the red shoes worn by the witch in Snow White, along with various contemporary films, contribute to the rich tapestry of red shoe narratives within the novel.

In many red shoe stories, their efficacy is often contained or destroyed. For instance, in the conclusion of Dorothy's Oz adventure, despite realizing her bravery, kindness, and intelligence, she still yearns to return home—the place identified by feminist scholars as the ultimate symbol of women's oppression (Rohrer Paige 1996, 148). However, Paramaditha's novel takes a divergent path. In various endings, the wandering persists. In one scenario where the narrator seemingly returns home, she relinquishes her shoes and returns home to Jakarta. After a brief stay with your sister, the realization dawns that you must carve your own path. Packing up and hailing a taxi, you encounter *Iblis*, the demon lover, driving the car. He hands you the shoes, inviting you to go on a new adventure while cautioning that your past will be erased. The end of the chapter chides you, "If you have the courage, put on your red shoes and return to page 9, the beginning of your adventure" (*Wandering*, 420).[22] This form of wandering, in stark contrast to how Dorothy's journey concludes in compliant domesticity, suggests a reclaiming of the female imagination's power (Rohrer Paige 1996, 147). The liminal spaces within and beyond the Indonesian archipelago provide a subversive means to challenge gender hegemony by traveling beyond *nusantara*, beyond the context of nation and home. That kind of travel is trespassing.

Dorothy's travels also reinforce the icon of home as the domestic center for women. As mentioned before, the red shoes came from the

21 The original novel by L. Frank Baum was called *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and it was published in 1900. In the novel, Dorothy's magic shoes were silver.

22 *Bila kau punya keberanian, kenakan sepatu merahmu dan kembalilah ke halaman pertama* (*Gentayangan*, 475).

witch that Dorothy killed when her house fell into Oz from the sky. By taking the shoes, Dorothy inserts herself into a lineage of powerful witches, or bad women. Rohrer Paige observes that the divide between good witch and bad witch in *Oz* is not clearcut; even Glenda is a witch, suggesting "that all women, even the ones patriarchy deems 'good,' have a bit of 'witch' (traditionally, a negative appellation) in them" (1996, 149). Dorothy discovers the power of the feminine imagination on her quest, but then abandons this power (and the red shoes) to return to Kansas, "thus fulfilling patriarchy's prescription for her" (Rohrer Paige 1996, 152). Paramaditha imagines new legacies for the red shoes that allow you, the reader, to overcome a similar fate.

Where did the red shoes come from before they ended up in Oz on the witch's feet? Like in the *Wizard of Oz*, Paramaditha offers a story that implants the witches, Dorothy, the other women on the train, and you (as the reader) into such a powerful lineage. As the novel says, "Red shoes always seem to contain traces of other women" (*Wandering*, 125).[23] Paramaditha traces the origins of her red shoes to another story, "Red Shoes" by Hans Christian Andersen. In this tale, the shoes were originally a gift from a shoemaker for his sick wife, but she died before he finished them. The bereft shoemaker lost his will to live but sat and worked day and night to finish the shoes. By spring, he finished the shoes. The shoemaker put the shoes in the shop window and commented to his assistant Tom, "Whoever owns these [red] shoes will never stop traveling" (*Wandering*, 379).[24] Tom assumed the shoemaker would never sell the beautiful shoes. But one day a girl appeared at the door wearing a different pair of tight red shoes made of red velvet. Her shoes were in poor condition, but the girl refused to wear any other shoes. The girl grew up very poor, and these were her only shoes. She even had to wear them to her mother's funeral. After her mother died, the girl was adopted by a rich woman, so although she could afford new shoes, she still wore the old red ones. The girl then bought the red shoes from the shoemaker and wore them everywhere. Thus, within her history of the red shoes, Paramaditha intertwines Indonesian myth and Western fairytale. The girl's mother scolds her adopted daughter because it is not proper to wear red shoes to church. The mother, however, can't see

23 *Sepatu merah selalu menyimpan jejak perempuan lain* (*Gentayangan*, 136).
24 *Siapa pun yang memiliki sepatu merah ini akan terus berjalan* (*Gentayangan*, 431).

well so the girl wears them anyway and lies claiming to wear simple black shoes. Paramaditha comments, "Truly, she was not better than the faithless Malin Kundang" (*Wandering*, 380).[25] And for her sin, the girl would suffer a similar fate to being turned to stone.

In front of the church one day, the girl meets a soldier who declares the red shoes would be ideal for dancing; the girl then danced and danced and danced. She grew tired, but could not stop dancing, it was as if the shoes were possessed by a demon. The girl begged the church leaders to cut her feet off; they did and she died. "The red shoes that knew no rest, however, chose adventure and went missing" (*Wandering*, 381).[26] For generations the red shoes traveled from girl to girl, "stirring up inappropriate desires. And girls in red shoes never return home" (*Wandering*, 381).[27] The red shoes once again subvert the place of home with placelessness of wandering.

Paramaditha uses the "choose-your-own adventure" format to insert the reader into this lineage of adventurous women from fiction and history who might be considered "red shoe women." After the girl dies from having her feet cut off, you appear in the story—and you are standing at the shoemaker's grave. You have a choice to return the shoes to their owner (set them down upon the grave) or continue traveling. Each of these will take you to a different ending. If you return the shoes, the book challenges, "Nobody has the right to determine your adventures, including the author with arbitrary whims... It's time for you to write the end of your adventure (maybe it will never really end)" (*Wandering*, 391),[28] and the chapter ends with blank lines giving the reader space to write her own ending. If you decide to keep the shoes, however, you must run away from the shoemaker's grave. Even though you run and run, you keep going in circles within a dark labyrinth. No matter what you do, you keep arriving back at the grave, which finally opens and you fall in. You fall into the endless darkness and are

25 *Sungguh ia mirip dengan anak durhaka si Milan Kundang* (*Gentayangan*, 432).

26 *Sebaliknya, sepatu merah yang tak kenel lelah memilih bertualang dan tersesat* (*Gerntayangan, 433*).

27 *Membangkitkan nafsu tak pantas. Dan gadis-gadis bersepatu merah tak pernah pulang* (*Gentayangan*, 433).

28 *Tak ada berhak menentukan petualanganmu termasuk pengarang yang semena-mena... Ini waktunya kau tuliskan akhir petualanganmu* (*berangkali ia tak pernah benar-benar berakher*) (*Gentayangan*, 443).

informed, "Your story is coming to an end now. To learn your final fate, turn to page 414" (*Wandering*, 398).[29]

When you turn to page 414 you discover that after floating in blackness you land in an empty train station where time stands still. At this point, Paramaditha multiplies the red shoes as a symbol of women who resisted normalcy. A train stops and you hop aboard. The other passengers are women, and you slowly realize they are other adventurous "bad women" such as Amelia Earhart, Gertrude Stein, Josephine Baker, and even the narrator's own Aunt Victoria. They are all wearing a pair of red shoes. You panic and demand to go home, but the conductor, Gertrude Stein, asserts, "No one on this train wants to go home. As you can see, all your fellow passengers are looking for adventure" (*Wandering*, 416).[30] The home described here is not a literal house, but the representational space of home as a symbol of women's domesticity and subordination. As you continue to demand to go home, Gertrude Stein leans forward towards you and whispers, "The problem is that when you get there, there's no there there" (*Wandering*, 417).[31] Home is revealed as a myth, and like other myths, it does not really exist. Oz isn't real; home isn't real. Rather, home resembles the uncertain and changing status of *nusantara*. "Yes, they're all wearing red shoes, and this train will not stop," and repeats the refrain, "Good girls go to heaven, bad girls go wandering" (*Wandering*, 417).[32] Through the red shoes, Indonesian myth and Western fairytales appear together like two islands on the horizon offering perspective on distance and size; but the story takes you between them into the unknown. With or without the red shoes, you continue to wander.

Island #4: Monsters and Mirrors

Often in the story, mirrors are the doors to adventures; different stories reflect different truths of identity. In interviews, Paramaditha explained

29 *Ceritamu habis, sampai di sini. Jika kau ingin tahu bagaimana kau berakhir, buka halaman 468* (*Gentayangan*, 434).

30 *Di sini tak ada yang mau pulang. Seperti yang kau lihat, di sini orang mencari petualangan* (*Gentayangan*, 470).

31 *Masalahnya, sesampainya di sana, tak ada di sana di sana* (*Gentayangan*, 471).

32 *Ya, mereka semua mengenakan sepatu merah, dan kereta ini tak akan berhenti*; and *Cewek baik masuk surga, cewek bandel gentayangan* (*Gentayangan*, 472).

that she views the mirror as a tool for revolution. For example, in her critique of the documentary Indonesian film *The Look of Silence* by John Oppenheimer (a sequel to his 2012 Oscar-nominated film *The Act of Killing*), Paramaditha invokes the idea of a mirror to explain both how the film works and how Indonesia might deal with its dark past. In both films, Oppenheimer asks survivors and perpetrators of the brutal murders during Indonesia's 1965–66 anti-communist massacre to meet and describe/reenact their crimes. In *The Look of Silence*, she explains the TV screen acts as a mirror because "it presents a horrifying truth and gives [the viewer] deeper access to the perpetrator's story." But as Paramaditha observes, the power-dynamic in the film as mirror is more complicated; the mirror does not only make truth visible but the director "offers a particular frame for me to interpret the image—which implicates [the viewer] in the power relation" (2013). *The Wandering* likewise seeks to not only reflect gender dynamics within and outside of Indonesia, but acts as a mirror exposing the creative process.

The choose-your-own-adventure format and use of second-person acts as a kind of mirror to insert the reader into the novel. Monika Fludernik, a leading scholar of second-person narrative style, asserts that second-person fiction is quite rare and there is considerable variance in the uses and interpretation of the second-person pronoun in a narrative. Within most definitions, the key is identifying the relation of the protagonist/narrator to the "you" within the story. For example, sometimes the "you" addresses the reader, sometimes "a narrator (speaker) tells the story of the "you" to (sometimes) the "you" protagonist's present-day absent or dead, wiser, self (1994, 288). Fludernik and others often make the point that while the second-person of the text is a narrator/character independent from the reader; many readers find the use of second-person to be both interesting and alienating because they are constantly reminded of their role as a reader.[33] *The Wandering*, however, is not a typical second-person text.

Denis Schofield, responding directly to Fludernik, delves into second-person texts that are akin to the choose-your-own-adventure

33 Bertolt Brecht, an influential theatre artist and theorist, describes alienation as a means to make the viewer aware that he/she is watching a theatre event. It fosters a meta-cognition and a critical stance. I see the second-person viewpoint in literature functioning similarly.

format. He explains how this format transforms reading a book into a game-like experience, fostering the illusion "that he or she is the person upon whose wisdom and fortune rests the final outcome [...] there seems a collapse of reader address and character reference, one falling into the other" (1997, 98). Echoing this sentiment, religious philosopher Eleonore Stump contends that the second-person narrative engenders a unique relationship between the self and the other, stating, "Second-person experience requires conscious contact with another person considered as a person; contact of that sort doesn't need perception, but it does take more than an image or a memory of a person" (2001, 749).

In *The Wandering*, the use of second-person narration involves the reader in providing a particular kind of consciousness to the narrator, transcending the realm of a purely fictional character. This narrative technique introduces a sense of instability in the relationship between time and space concerning the reader and the character. This mirrors the novel's overarching theme of a destabilized world that seamlessly shifts between reality, myth, various places, and times. The narrator, much like the reader, is not always cognizant of her current location, let alone her destination. Critical moments prompt the reader to make choices, influencing how the story unfolds and concludes. This unconventional point of view not only directly addresses the reader but immerses them in the unfolding action. A blurred distinction arises between the agency and identity of the character and that of the reader. The use of the second-person narrative serves as a reflective mirror, prompting the reader to be conscious of themselves within the act of reading the story—an intricate dance between inside and outside, echoing the nuanced relationship of *nusantara*.

Sometimes the narrative point-of-view in *The Wandering* shifts to third or first (or a mix). For example, in one scene,[34] a woman you meet, Yvette, shares your fascination with the films of Juwita Padmadivya and gives you an essay that attempts to analyze the (fictional) filmmaker's obtuse, unfinished documentary. In an interview with Paramaditha about *The Wandering*, scholar and essayist Lara Norgard explains the impact of this character:

34 I realize the novel is not a movie or a play, but it seems disingenuous given the episodic nature of the narrative to use the word "chapter," which seems to suggest a fixed and planned path through the story

> An equally mysterious, anonymous first-person narrator—perhaps Paramaditha herself—enters our story to present us with Juwita's letters to an American film editor, and to draw our attention to the layers of rewriting intrinsic to the stories in her novel: "In building a narrative about Juwita through two mediums, I myself invariably play the role of another editor. I need not stress that based on the character of this work, with its cutting, pasting and rearranging, you are unlikely to ever locate Juwita" (Norgard 2020).

Through the insertion of stories like this, Paramaditha calls attention to the second-person narration and how the reader actively constructs meaning within the story.

Typically, concerning the content of the structure of a novel, the power resides with the author, but second-person gives an unusual agency to the reader. Further, the second-person offers the opportunity to *perform* the dynamics of power by drawing attention to the "you" who narrates the story and the "you" of the reader (Fludernik 1994, 311–12). The reader performs the story through the text, and through this participation the in-between space is strongly evoked. The use of the second-person also has implications for traditional gender binaries. The reader is posited as female, even referred to as a "she," placing a woman as the primary meaning-maker, regardless of the actual gender of the reader. The second-person narrative thus becomes a mirror, where the reader can know herself through the experiences in the novel.

When you gaze into the mirror in the novel it reveals that you are not just a "bad girl" who wears lipstick and has sex with demons and others, but that you are a *kuntilanak*, or other monsters. Many of these monsters reveal the world is not always how the main character imagined, for example your family might be capable of horrible crimes, or your kind friend might be a prostitute. Throughout, monsters are invoked as both complicated symbols of female power and as a warning; monsters are always outside, among, and between.

Monster stories have a long history in Southeast Asia, often predating the influences of religions such as Hinduism or Islam. Andrew Hock-Soon Ng, in his study of monsters around Asia in literature and folktales, observes that through trade and other cultural exchanges various monsters have been incorporated into the cultural imaginations around the continent. He argues that monsters in Asia have deeper significance than their Western counterparts, which often reinforce dichotomies of

good and evil. He explains, "monsters in Asian narratives are rarely evil in an absolute sense, and they become transgressive usually either because of their refusal to comply with their allotted responsibilities as prescribed by the dominant structuring order [...] or because they harbor forbidden desires" (2012, 53–54). Ng concludes that many of these monsters in literature and folktales in Asia often reinforce social and religious structures. The monsters in *The Wandering* call attention to the complex nature of good and evil and how women navigate those different structures. The monsters reveal how women live in between islands and find freedom, trespassing in an archipelagic space.

At one point in the story, you are waiting at JFK and see a woman scribbling in a notebook with her left hand; she also eats with her left hand. "You remember your recitation teacher's words: eating and drinking with your left hand is satanic. Maybe a lot of demons roam this city" (*Wandering*, 362).[35] When the woman gets up and leaves, you notice her notebook on the floor. You open it and see scrawled details about the same route you are traveling. It seems like the difference between you and this woman blurs, and you continue to read a long section called "Visiting a Haunted House." The story is about a girl, living in New York, who could not return to Indonesia for her grandmother's, Victoria's, funeral. A year later she goes back, her family is trying to sell the creepy old house. The story explains that people in the area say the house is haunted by a *kuntilanak*.

According to many Malay myths, a *kuntilanak* is a woman who has died in childbirth and is cursed to wander the world, stealing other people's children. In some versions she transforms into a beautiful woman to lure her victims, and in others she is depicted as a loving mother before her death. In *The Wandering*, the woman's journal describes her experience in the haunted house. She recounts how she stands before her grandmother's cloudy mirror:

> On the table lay a small book of Islamic scripture, empty perfume bottles and broken tubes of red lipstick. Red like the mouth of a baby-devouring *kuntilanak*. Who made herself up in the mirror now? (*Wandering*, 369).[36]

35 *Kau teringat kata guru:makan dan minumndangan tangan kiri adalah perbuatan setan. Mungkin banyak juga setan menjelma di kota ini* (*Gentayangan*, 411).

36 *Di meja tergeletak surat Yasin. botol minyak wangi kosong. dan lipstik merah patah. Merah, seperti mulut kuntilanak pemakan orok. Siapa yang berhias di depan cermin sekerang?*

The lipsticks and perfume left near the mirror are not the relics of a "good" woman, they do not suggest motherhood, rather, they indicate sexuality. Many Indonesian women authors getting international attention,[37] including Paramaditha, include explicit sexuality in their work as a direct challenge to the repression of female sexuality in Indonesia. In one of her scholarly publications, Paramaditha explains that the body thus becomes a site for women authors to "speak for themselves" and that "Indonesian women writers bring back the body by writing, making an alignment between sex and text" (2007, 67). Rosaland Galt writes that the *pontianak* (the Malay name for the *kuntilanak*) in contemporary cinema is a popular figure that embodies the "misogynist fear of women as monstrous figures who must be subdued (2021, 79). The *kuntilanak* in the story is not defeated, but it wanders in the contradictory spaces of *nusantara*, symbolizing the restlessness of the Indonesian woman who seeks to defeat the binary of feminine identity.

But the author of the journal writes that she does not want to see a *kuntilanak* in the mirror—she wants to see her grandmother. But at that moment you step closer to see the face of the woman in the mirror—"My knees trembled and, at that moment, I realized my grandmother was no wandering spirit, at least not in this house. The wandering spirit was me" (*Wandering*, 369–70).[38]

The mirror is an important motif in *kuntilanak* stories, and Ng notes that in monster stories the mirror often "is a symbol that signifies the two apparent dangers women traditionally pose to men (the desire for beauty and the desire to look)" (2014, 444). Additionally, the *kuntilanak* is usually destroyed by breaking the mirror. Ng continues that "women, when transformed into or aligned with monsters, discover a new and empowered sense of self otherwise denied them" (2014, 444). In *The Wandering*, the *kuntilanak* signifies a dangerous, transgressive potential within women. When the writer of the journal gazes into the mirror, she sees a *kuntilanak* and therefore the *kuntilanak* in the mirror is also you, the reader. Like the history of *nusantara*, identity shifts from there to here between generations.

(*Gentayangan*, 419).

37 Such as Ayu Utama, Dewi Lestari, Leila Chudori, Laksmi Pamuntjak, Oka Rusmini, and others. It is notable that many of these women also include themes of travel and live and work globally.

38 *Lutuku sedikit gemetar. Saat itu aku sadar bahwa nenekku tak bergentayangan, sedikitnya tidak di rumah ini. Hantu itu adalah aku* (*Gentayangan*, 420).

Island #5: Endings

Wandering does not have a single destination; likewise, there are about fifteen different endings to *The Wandering* (it is hard to count because some endings also lead to another beginning, as the one I described before). Together the endings form a kind of "archipelagraphy: a re-presentation of identity, interaction, space and place that comes across in different combinations of affect, materiality, performance, things" and that "such counter-mapping requires a double-destabilization: dislocating and de-territorializing the objects of study—the fixity of island difference and particularity—and constituting in their place a site or viewing platform by which they are perceived and analyzed afresh and anew" (Stratford et al. 2011, 114). The endings challenge reader expectations and reinforce the main themes of the novel.

If the quintessential plot structure of Western individuality adheres to what Joseph Campbell terms "the hero's journey," where the hero is typically a robust adult male (2004), how does *The Wandering* fit into this narrative paradigm? To answer this question, I will return again to *The Wizard of Oz*, a tale that looms large in the discussion. David Emerson delves into Dorothy's role in *The Wizard of Oz*, characterizing it as a feminine iteration of the hero's journey. Despite attempting to interpret Dorothy's return home as a form of triumph, Emerson fails to build a compelling case that Dorothy is a hero (2009, 137). In stark contrast, *The Wandering's* protagonist is neither youthful nor innocent. The narratives within the novel resist the notion of finding a definitive home, whether it involves a return or the creation of a new one. Paramaditha appears to overtly challenge the traditional hero's journey with the story's conclusions. It seems that, for her, the only means to break free from the "home" of patriarchy and/or a third-world nation is to perpetually embrace the act of wandering.

Most fiction typically unfolds with a singular, predetermined ending, making stories like *The Wandering* a rare exception. Even the choose-your-own-adventure novels from my childhood, while featuring numerous perilous outcomes, usually converged towards one favorable or triumphant conclusion. Those stories were akin to navigating a maze of choices to ensure survival and accomplish a quest. In contrast, *The Wandering* diverges from this hierarchical structure of endings. The

myriad conclusions in the novel can be interpreted as a deliberate strategy to disrupt hegemonic social structures. Writing about literary theory and the Global South, Dilip M. Menon calls for a complication of time and space, that a story:

> can become a point of entry into thinking with words from different languages and traditions and bringing them into conversation. Their seeming isolation, island-ness, and location within putative bounded spaces of traditions, is disrupted once imagines their relation to other words within other traditions. An archipelagic affinity can be forged between these words in different spaces and languages, and this is what makes the work of concept formation possible (2022, 156).

When something, such as a work of fiction, challenges established social or aesthetic norms, it is perceived as a social disruption (Cova and Garcia 2015, 107). In the case of *The Wandering*, the unique use of multiple endings serves to reinforce the interventionist nature that also permeates the content of the novel. Likewise, various peoples around parts of Southeast Asia embrace *nusantara* as a linguistic term to unite people around shared identities that are distinct from Western or other foreign influences (Evers 2016, 12). Language, geography, and structure converge to claim a localized power that can be articulated globally.

In order to better explore the options offered within this multiplicity, I have divided the different endings of the novel into three distinct groups. The first grouping of endings are those that seem to end in some kind of unhappy conclusion. You are not really dead, but you no longer exist in the same world as the living. In one of these endings you are trapped on a spaceship, tied to a teleporting machine as an alien is counting down to lift-off. The final words read, "There is no air. There is no sound. Are you floating? What colour is the sky? There are no answers to your questions" (*Wandering*, 33–34).[39] This is similar to another ending that has you in your apartment as it fills with light, but you don't know who you are. Demon Lover strokes your hair and sings the song "Hush, little baby don't say a word, Papa's gonna buy you a mockingbird" that ends with, "Papa's gonna buy you a looking glass," and then the last line asks, "Who is gazing in the mirror now?"

39 *Tak ada udara. Tak ada suara. Apakah kau melayang? Apa warna langit di luar sana? Tak ada jawaban untuk pertanyaan-pertanyaan* (*Gentayangan*, 38).

(*The Wandering*, 197).[40] The questions at the end of these endings evade a sense of finality. Even though that version of the story ends, the reader is left to ponder the questions beyond the borders of the page, and thus these endings transport the reader into the instability *of nusantara*, where various meanings co-exist. Is there a space for the adventurous woman?

The second group of endings finish the story with you losing or giving up the red shoes. But does that mean your adventure has ended? Not necessarily. There are only a couple of endings like this, and they promise that, "Life feels uncertain, and it won't become any easier, but that may in fact be why you feel happy. Without the red shoes you will go on adventures again" (*The Wandering*, 409).[41] These endings, although uncertain, invoke an archipelagic possibility where you will find happiness within the struggles of life.

The third type of endings lead to new beginnings; the story hasn't really ended. As described earlier, in some of these the reader is invited to write her own ending. In others, the reader is given an option to go back and continue the adventure with different choices. These not only point the reader outside of the novel for a conclusion but require the reader to seize agency to determine her own destiny. The events of the novel overlap with the events of the reader's life by foregrounding choice. This emphasizes the similar agency Indonesia has claimed within modernity and extends that invitation to the woman reader.

Through its form and content, *The Wandering* engages the (Indonesian) reader as a global reader and women's bodies as a site for liberation. The idea of the archipelago, especially understood as *nusantara* offers a language to explore the different tactics of resistance, what I call trespassing, within the book. Through mirrors, monsters, and red shoes, Paramaditha imagines the reader as an individual with agency to make her own way.

The reader is constantly thrust into the in-between spaces that emphasize relationships and possibility over fixed binaries. No two readers will experience the novel the same and there are likely hundreds of combinations of events, characters, and endings. Once again echoing

40 The Indonesian version gives the song in English, and then asks *Siapa yang bercermin sekerang?* (*Gentayangan*, 218).

41 *Hidup terasa tak pasti, juga tak akan jadi lebih mudah, tapi mungkin karena itulah kau merasa berbahagia. Tampa sepatu merah, kau akan bertualang lagi* (*Gentayangan*, 463).

the among and in-between language of *nusantara*, one ending reads: "Yes, this is the end of your story. A journey doesn't always need a conclusion. Here, a journey is a space between, a constant uncertainty... Please stop reading, unless you want to come face-to-face with the ghosts of the past" (*The Wandering*, 406).[42] Thus, Paramaditha creates a literary language for the modern woman of the Global South to stop dwelling in the colonial and patriarchal past, and to write her own travel adventure to trespass beyond the limits of the home/nation/island.

42 *Ya, inilah akhir ceritamu. Perjalanan tak selalu butuh penuntup. Di sini, perjalanan adalah ruang di antara, ketidakpastian yang terus-menerus... Silikan berhenti membaca, kecuali kau ingin berhadapan dengan hantu-hantu masa lalu* (*Gentayangan*, 459).

2. Dancing Strangers

Dressed in a stiff, ornate sarong and wrapped tightly in bright yellow strips of fabric, I was ready to dance [*Figure 1*]. *For over a month, I had been practicing with the other two dancers to perform pendet, a welcoming dance that is a common start to any dance performance in Bali, whether the context is sacred or secular. In pendet, the dancers hold small baskets or dishes with flower petals to scatter in honor of the gods and other guests. This performance was at a party at the beautiful house of Anak Agung Arini, a celebrated dancer and teacher. After our opening dance, the remainder of the evening would feature joged, a social dance where women dancers invite men from the audience* (*pengibing B.*) *to join them onstage. The joged dancers were experienced and popular Balinese dancers, while I and the other two pendet dancers were from the United States. Our clumsy attempts at the difficult dance movements were made even more strange by our white skin, and in my case, light blonde hair* [*Figure 2*]. (*Field Notes, July 2009*)

Fig. 1 The author is dressed in a costume to perform Balinese Dance (Photo: Tina Goodlander).

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https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0542.02

Fig. 2 The author and several other Americans performing pendet at the opening of a dance performance (Photo: Tina Goodlander).

The example above, from my own field research in Bali, demonstrates a number of the ideas and questions that are the central focus of this chapter. These include not just the relationships between dance, beauty, and culture, but especially how dance enables foreign bodies to move across boundaries in society and culture. I and the others, through our study and then performance of Balinese dance, entered a system of generations of dancers. Dance provided entry into a social and ritual space that was foreign to us; it was strange. Dance allowed us inside this world, but we persisted as strange—as strangers. I argue something (or someone) foreign can make visible the subversive power of the strange. In this chapter, I use my experiences to analyze of the novel *Tarian Bumi* (*Earth Dance*) by Oka Rusmini[1] and to explore how the foreign,

1 *Earth Dance* was first published as a newspaper serial in in 1995, and them as a novel in 2000, the story has been translated into five languages and was rereleased several times in Indonesia, most recently in 2021. A short film was made of the story in 2014 by Rai Pendet, which premiered at the Jogja National Museum and toured Europe. Rusmini has won many national and international awards and is the author

or strange, can function through dance to enable trespassing across and beyond repressive social structures.

Earth Dance tells the stories of four generations of women who cross borders, not of nations, but borders of class as they move up and down the Balinese caste hierarchy. Caste is a major theme in most of Rusmini's work; in her writing she seeks to "explore the constraints that the socio-religious practices of caste place on all members of society, but most especially women" (Aveling 2010, 1). The societal structure in Hindu Bali comprises four castes, with Brahmin at the top, followed by Kesatria and Veisia, collectively known as the Triwangsa, representing a form of nobility. Sudra, constituting approximately 90% of the population, occupies the lowest, or commoner, caste. The intricate and nuanced nature of status within the Triwangsa is manifested through aspects such as naming, language, and attitude. In contrast, the Sudra lack a comparable differentiation, perceiving one another as relatively equal within their caste (Eiseman 2011, 25–37). Moving from one caste to the other is not unlike moving from one land to another; it makes a person a stranger.

The women in the center of *Earth Dance* challenge caste by moving, through marriage, both up and down the social hierarchy. Luh Sekar marries into the Brahmin, or upper caste, when she weds Ida Bagus Ngurah Pidada. Within Balinese society it is somewhat acceptable for a woman to marry up in caste, thus elevating her and her family's social status. Her daughter, Ida Ayu Telaga Pidada, however, falls in love with a man of the lower, Sudra caste. When Telaga marries Wayan Sasmitha she is no longer welcome, or recognized, by her Brahmin family. It was and is considered much more problematic for a woman to marry down (Creese 2008, 4). In real life, this kind of traveling up and down the social hierarchy does happen, but often with dire consequences. Families become estranged, and sometime there are even harsh legal penalties, such as exile. The novel ends with Telaga completing a ritual to sever the ties to her Brahmin family for good.

Earth Dance's popularity depends in part on the strangeness of caste, which is a popular topic for Balinese authors and attracts non-Balinese readers from around the archipelago.[2] Balinese literary critic I Nyoman

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of several novels, short stories, and poetry.

2 Only about 1.7% of the population in Indonesia is Hindu, where most people are

Darma Putra confirms that the topic of caste has earned several authors, including Rusmini, national attention. Even though caste is specifically Balinese, "the theme is often discussed within a universal context such as a conflict between tradition and modernity or intergenerational disagreements" (2011, 151). For most Indonesians, Bali is exotic and strange.

In *Earth Dance*, movement between castes, through dance, depend on the feet. In Bali, as well, the feet have special significance. For example, in dance they are always bare and always moving; the position of the feet communicate gender, age, and status of the character in the dance. Even in purely aesthetic forms, the feet still shimmer with life, always alert—the toes are curled back and the arch is raised. Furthermore, the human body in Bali provides an aesthetic map that determines the size and structures of homes and temples. Everything must be in proportion and in harmony. This ideal reverberates among and between dance, painting, architecture, ceremony, and the shadow puppet theatre (*wayang kulit*.) The feet connect the dancer to the earth, and in some way they therefore bridge the visible and invisible realms—the *sekala* and *niskala*.

In *Earth Dance*, the feet empower the women characters in the novel to trespass across social boundaries within ritual and especially in dance. In order to understand how strangeness and travel function within the novel I am inspired by how Janet Wolff identifies the stranger as a figure adjacent to the flâneur. The flâneur is aloof and disconnected, but he has the power to move and observe freely. In contrast, the stranger seeks attachment through mobility, but remains an outsider who is always a "potential wanderer" (1985, 40). Furthermore, Julia Kristeva recognizes that it is possible to be a stranger within a culture or nation and also a stranger to oneself and that from this perspective can emerge a new ethics and identity (Oliver 1991, 62). The ethnographer as stranger has become cliché; she travels to a new culture in order to learn about human societies.[3] Likewise, the women characters in the

Muslim. There are very few Hindus outside of Bali—and even those are mostly ethnic Balinese. So even though Bali figures large in the global and even Indonesian imagination, it is very much a cultural and religious anomaly.

3 The concept of the ethnographer as stranger began with Hortense Powdermaker in 1966 and has since been invoked in countless articles and monographs about ethnography.

novel, through their actions and identities, are strange, or strange-er. Especially when these women resist society's roles and thus become strange-her.

In this chapter, I am inspired by Vietnamese filmmaker and author Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989, 74–76)[4] who espouses the power of storytelling as a means to challenge the dichotomy of truth and fiction to destabilize authority and foster a multiplicity of voices and perspectives. Similarily, Rusmini draws attention to women's bodies through her use of dance in the narrative and throughout the text. I enhance this multiplicity through my own "self-accounting" (Trinh 1989, 74) where I explore the connections and interrelationships between text and embodied performance as a method of cross-cultural critical analysis. My own ethnographic strangeness in dance and culture in conversation with how the women characters move between the strange lands of different castes, allows me to center how the text performs the body as primary to the novel's subversion of gender norms.

Learning to Dance

Today I went to my teacher, Ibu Happy's house,[5] *for my dance lesson. She lives in a small village outside of Gianyar, away from the hustle and bustle of Ubud.*

The garage is their dance studio with a raised platform as a stage area located at the back. On the upstage wall an outline of a temple is painted in red and the center door is flanked by two umbrellas. There is a display case along the wall on the right side of the stage that contains a variety of costume pieces and props. A couple of gamelan[6] *instruments, a bamboo instrument, and drum took up space on the stage as well. During class, the students and myself usually danced on the floor of the garage; the stage was only used for performances. On the wall Ibu Happy had hung two long mirrors, just like a ballet studio. Mirrors*

4 Trinh T. Minh-ha intentionally retains the Vietnamese convention of putting her last name before her first. Therefore, her first name is Min-ha (the T. indicates her female gender) and Trinh is her last name. I have maintained her preferred order in the text, but then adhere to the publisher's style guide in the bibliography and in-text references.

5 To read more about Ibu Happy and her dance studio, see McIntosh 2025.

6 *Gamelan* refers to the metallophone ensemble that is common in parts of Indonesia. There are various different kinds and types of these ensembles, but their music is central to the performance of Balinese dance.

are uncommon. I hadn't ever studied Balinese dance while being able to look at myself and it was a little disorientating at first. It didn't help that Ibu Happy is so much smaller than me… My image in the mirror felt huge standing next to her. And I looked so awkward as I tried to do the dance! However, as I got used to my reflection it ended up being very useful. I was able to correct my body position, especially my torso. Also—it allowed Ibu Happy to dance in front of me and to still see what I was doing and to give me corrections. The dance we were working on was really tiring!

During a break for some snacks and coffee, Ibu Happy asked if I had ever learned a male dance like baris.[7] *I told her I did a little when I took the program with Çudumani.*[8] *Ibu Happy said that next we could learn baris, and she explained she does not really care for the female dances* (*and with that statement she did a great job of mocking the delicate female movement with her head and arms*). *Ibu Happy explained she preferred the dynamic and strong movements of the male dances.*

We danced for two more hours and have gotten about halfway through the dance. We are going to meet back at the library in Ubud for our next lesson. Primarily because it is easier for me, but also because it will keep her from getting in trouble for stealing me away as a student in their dance program. (*Field Notes, January 2009*)

Dance is central to the novel's themes and characters; it is not just that the characters in the novel are dancers, or that they dance in the story. Dance travels across borders and through bodies. I argue that dance offers a fundamental and strategic site of strangeness in the novel for Rusmini to upset norms of gender and caste hierarchy.

Dance in Bali connects to religion, commerce, and power. For example, Indonesia has used dance in cultural diplomacy projects. Balinese dance is studied and performed all over the world. Also, tourism and

7 *Baris* is a warrior dance often performed by men in a line during a procession or temple ceremony. The movements are fundamental to many male dances. There is also a more elaborate version of *baris* that is often performed at tourist shows by a solo dancer.

8 *Çudumani* is the name of a Balinese music and dance group located South of Ubud. In collaboration with UCLA they run a three-week intensive art and culture program during the summer. I participated in this program as my first introduction to Bali in 2007.

opportunities to perform internationally have shaped Balinese dance.[9] Within the dance, local aesthetics, stories, and a love of novelty are all equally important.[10]

Translating an ephemeral and bodily practice like dance into a novel inserts a strangeness into how the reader understands the text. Helen Gilbert describes an approach for considering the function of dance within dramatic literature (both performed and read). Her description gives an excellent starting place for considering how dance functions and is "performed" within *Earth Dance*:

> As a focalizing agent, [dance] draws attention to the rhetoric of embodiment in all performance, something which is less apparent in dramatization of dialogue, especially within the conventions of realism. Even while bringing the body into focus, dance also spatializes, which is to say it foregrounds proxemic relations between characters, spectators, and features of the set. The ever-shifting relational axis of space breaks down the binary structures that seek to situate dance as either image or identity, and the spectator as observer rather than co-producer of meaning. Furthermore, situated within a dramatic text, dance often de-naturalizes theatre's signifying practices by disrupting narrative sequence and/or genre (1992, 135).

I agree with Gilbert that dance contains the potential to disrupt narrative, character, and the signifying codes not only in theatre but also, I believe, within a novel. Dance is inherently strange in both because it disrupts. The written text of a novel lacks the embodied performance of a dancer onstage, therefore, the strategies for using dance must be different. My own study and performance of dance (and other art forms), allowed me to read the dance in the words. My experience, like the mirror in the garage, sharpens the view, but also helps reveal "how strange."

9 There have been many studies on the origins of Balinese dance and how in the twentieth century these dances and dancers have circulated internationally. For example, see Cohen 2010 or Vickers 2013.

10 Many different genres of Balinese art and performance also value novelty, this is not unique to dance.

Seeing the Beauty in Dance

In the evening, I met my friend Made and we went to Sukuwati to have another puppet lesson with Ibu Nondri, one of the few women dalang, or puppeteers, in Bali. I brought my puppets,music, and tape recorder with me—I was ready to learn. Ibu Nondri had promised that she would teach me "Rebong," a love song that is important for the female characters in a wayang performance. I enjoyed learning from Pak Tunjung, my primary teacher, but I was excited to have an opportunity to work with a woman dalang.[11] *Rebong is a song about the many beautiful qualities of a girl and the song is often used anytime there is a female character in the story* (*most performances I saw had no female characters.*). *The song is pretty set, but there is also one verse that can then be structured in different ways. This verse can be repeated, or the dalang can stop singing and do some dialogue. Like so many aspects of performance, it is "set," but in such a way that there is room for a lot of creativity. The melody and the rhythm with the gamelan also seemed very fluid. During the song, the female characters would dance gracefully on the screen.*

I enjoyed the lesson with Ibu Nondri, but she seemed a little lost about what to do with me. She was clearly uncomfortable with teaching an outsider, a stranger. But I so enjoyed meeting her and hearing her passionately talk about performances or characters. As I rode home on the back of Made's motorbike I thought about how the content of the song for female characters is all about how beautiful they are. It stresses outside, physical characteristics only. I am curious how this contrasts with the male characters who are most often discussed in terms of their personality and deeds? (*Field Notes, April 17, 2009*)

Beauty is often tied to gender and power within a culture. Art historian Janet Wolff (2006) considers the usefulness of beauty for understanding the impact of an artwork (with broader implications to the judgment of beauty more generally). She begins with the premise that feminists have long acknowledged that standards of "beauty" are applied to representations of women in art and media and that tenets of beauty express gender ideology. Wolff challenges the impulse to dismiss or universalize standards of beauty; instead, there are

11 I describe my experience learning and performing *wayang kulit* in detail in my 2016 book *Women in the Shadows: Gender, Puppets, and the Power of Tradition in Bali* (Ohio University Press), https://ohioopen.library.ohio.edu/oupress/115/

multiple and co-existing, even contradictory values of beauty. Rather than separate politics from beauty, Wolff calls for "a dialogic aesthetic theory, acknowledging the social location of discourse about beauty and other aesthetic judgments, will have no difficulty in admitting, and exploring, the interconnections between text and context" (2006, 154). Beauty is a key aesthetic that determines a woman's place in Bali and is expressed through multiple ways, including dance. Understanding beauty in the Balinese context is essential for understanding not just the implications of caste in the novel, but how gender relates to caste.

Anthropologist Leo Howe describes how for many Balinese, caste is an issue of beauty:

> On the other hand, some Balinese believe that visible distinguishing characteristics do exist. Given the titles they enjoy one could forgive gentry for describing themselves as having fine features, light skin, and faces which "shine," and that their character, deportment and behavior are refined and graceful. Commoners, by contrast, are described by gentry as having dark skin, course features and faces which are dreary and dull (2006, 113).

Ayu L. Sarswati argues that ideals of beauty as relating to caste, especially favoring fair skin, has long been intertwined in Indonesian history and culture (2013, 1–2). The characters in the novel do not change appearance as they move from one caste to another, but rather, dance becomes the foci for expressing and judging their beauty.

Dance in Bali is not just for entertainment or fun, but it is an important part of ritual and an expression of values. "Dancing is a ritual, dance poetry, movement created by the soul, possessed and conquered" (Fels 1931, 995 quoted in Hobart 2007, 107). For the dance to be effective in ritual it must be beautiful. Anthropologist Ed Herbst explains, "beauty, within ritual, is a basic ingredient of efficacy; it is a necessary component of any ceremonial activity, and in a sense, any social activity at all" (1981, 43). Balinese dance is more than just an artistic expression or entertainment but connects the dancer and audience to the visible and invisible worlds as ritual.[12]

12 Balinese dance is often divided into three categories: *wali* (sacred), *bebali* (semi-sacred), and *balih-balihan* (for entertainment). These categories reflect the history and use of each dance, but there is considerable fluidity between the categories.

Within the novel dance is often connected to beauty, and it is thus through dance the characters find access to deeper aspects of Balinese religious and social spheres. As such, "dance and music are not merely entertainment, but are also functions to maintain the balance of life, both materially and spiritually, real and unreal, inwardly and outwardly" (Sugiartha 2018, 4).

Dance is visual and ephemeral; the written word is not. How then is it possible for Rusmini to insert dance and its accompanying discourses of beauty into the novel? I argue that Rusmini employs an optic strategy to write about dance. In the first chapter, Rusmini challenges the hegemony of beauty and dance by destabilizing the ocular and narrative realms of the novel. The novel opens with seven-year-old Luh Sari and her mother Ida Ayu Telaga Pidada. They are poor, but Sari is energetic, loved at school, and ambitious. Dance connects their past and future—"Telaga hoped that one day her daughter would confirm her place in the world, that her little girl would become the most beautiful dancer in the village, possessing all the beauty of the god of dance" (*Earth Dance*, 12).[13] Telaga sees dance, connected with beauty, as an opportunity for her daughter to escape their poor life. She can trespass beyond the confines of her birth through beauty expressed in dance.

Beauty in Bali is not just a physical quality, but it is located within a woman's actions and her ability to hide her emotions. Balinese scholar Luh Ketut Suryani states "all these qualities will bring out the natural beauty of the whole woman" (2003, 210–11, my translation).[14] Telega was not always poor, in the stratified caste system of the Balinese, Telaga was born to a Brahmin family—the highest caste. As she grew older, she struggled to fit in with the powerful structures governing life in the *griya*, or Brahmin household. For example, she argues with her mother who wants her to wear an ornate *kabaya*[15] to a family function. Telaga resists, complaining that the *kebaya* is stiff and uncomfortable.

13 *Telaga sangat berharap, kelak bocah ini mampu memberinya tempat. Telaga juga berharap anak perempuannya akan menjelma menjadi penari tercantik di desa ini. Penari yang memiliki seluruh kecantikan dewa tari* (*Tarian Bumi*, 2–3).

14 *Semua itu akan memunculkan kecatikan alami sebagai pribadi seutuhnya.*

15 A *kebaya* is a traditional, figure-hugging blouse, characterized by an open-front design, and made from intricate embroidery or lace. It is typically worn paired with a batik sarong. In Bali, women wear the *kebaya* as part of traditional clothes.

Frustrated, her mother exclaims, "What is it now? You're getting stranger every day. You dance every day. Then you stay out until late. What are you looking for, *Tugeg*? Doesn't this house make you happy anymore?" (*Earth Dance*, 91).[16] Beauty and obedience are linked together, Telaga resists wearing the *kabaya* and her resistance makes her strange. Finally, her actions, falling in love with a man of the Sudra caste, are the final betrayal of her "beautiful nature" and Telaga is cast out of the *griya*.

The novel emphasizes dance and beauty as not only physical attributes, but how the body moves within social spheres are also inscribed with the qualities of dance. Rusmini references dance within the visuality of her descriptions. Within the first few pages there are several key examples. I want to list them side by side, to emphasize the cumulative nature of these key words and phrases with the Indonesian next to it for comparison, the key words are bolded:

- "Telaga, the girl's mother, stared at her daughter **wide-eyed**" (*Earth Dance*, 11). *Sari membuat Telaga* ***melotot*** (*Bumi Tarian*, 1).
- "Suddenly [Sari] jumped up from her mother's lap, throwing her gifts high into the air. Her skirt flew up to reveal her **beautiful little feet**" (*Earth Dance*, 11). *Lalu berputar sambil melempar tinggi-tinggi bungkusan yang ada di tangannya. Rok bocah itu naik, memperlihatkan kedua kakinya yang mungil.* ***Kaki itu terlihat sangat indah*** (*Tarian Bumi*, 2).
- "She was a woman trying to follow the truth of her heart... It was strange; but each time [Telaga] tried to convince herself of this her body **trembled**" (*Earth Dance*, 12). *Aneh, setiap dia ingin menyakinkan dirinya sendiri tubuhnya* ***menggigil*** (*Tarian Bumi*, 3).

The connection between dance and bodily movement/gesture is especially pronounced in Indonesian where for example, *melotot*, or "making the eyes big," or to "glare," would be given as a direction and quality within dance. Also, *bungkus* can refer to any kind of package,

16 *Ada apa lagi ini? Makin hari Tugeg makin aneh. Setiap hari menari. Keluar rumah sampai malam. Apa yang Tugeg cari? Apa rumah ini tidak cukup membuat Tugeg bahagia?* (*Tarian Bumi*, 109).

and in several popular Balinese dances such as *pendet* or *gabor* the women dancers carry a small *bungkus*, in this case a basket or tray holding flower petals as an offering, another kind of *hadiah*, or prize. Only moments before this exchange Telaga was celebrating with her daughter for winning many prizes in academic contests at school. The feet also again emerge here as an important element in Balinese dance. As I explained, the dancers perform barefoot and the toes are lifted, emphasizing the shape of the foot as a dynamic element in the dance. Trembling, or *menggigil* is an important quality of Balinese dance where toes and fingers are in constant motion.

Each of these elements in Balinese dance work together to make the dance and the dancer beautiful. By disrupting the visual signifiers of dance/beauty/culture in the opening of the novel, Rusmini disrupts the social hegemonies that the dance indicates and supports. Rusmini creates displacement and "unbalanced-ness" through these fragments.

The Strangeness of Beauty and Balance

In order for dance to be beautiful, and therefore effective within the context of Balinese ritual practice, it must be cohesive. Each of the individual elements, the trembling, the eyes, the complicated positions of the feet, torso, head, arms, and hands, must be in balance. The descriptions quoted above that are within the first few pages of the novel and they disrupt balance and makes strange.

In my own study of dance—I experienced strangeness when balance is challenged:

I was getting ready to leave for the library to go to dance class this morning. But I thought I had plenty of time. But then, it was a little confusing because Ibu Happy, my dance teacher, called me on the phone—I think to change the time of class. We originally planned on meeting at 10am, but then I thought she wanted to change in to 9:45am because of another rehearsal. It was a bit unclear. I am still struggling to understand Indonesian on the telephone. So, I headed over to the library as soon as I was dressed and ready. Class ended up being at 10am like we originally planned. Oh well. I was able to do some reading while I waited.

We started right away working on the new dance. It felt very awkward

compared to the other dance I had learned because the legs are not in a balanced position where you are crouched down. I felt like I just could not get the right placement of my weight. My feet are the same position as hers but it did not "feel" right. I felt very tall and awkward while Ibu Happy looked petite and graceful. She still seemed to have a semblance of the "s"—the desired shape from head to toe that is distinctive in Balinese dance. But my body could not find it.

In Bali, the main method of learning is to study an entire dance and then move on to the next one. The student does this instead of doing basic movements like would be common in ballet or jazz. This method of learning a whole dance and then moving on has its advantages and disadvantages. On one hand you feel like you are learning a lot because you know a whole dance. On the other hand, I felt like I am missing the many of the details of each movement. Just like in my study of wayang kulit, the shadow puppetry, I had to allow the learning to happen in layers. First you master a kind of "rough draft" of the movements and then you can refine the details from there. I wonder if there isn't a practical aspect to that as well. By learning the entire dance—I could do a performance if I had to, because I could stumble through a dance from start to finish. I saw this when I was at wedding ceremony on Lombok. A group of girls dancing were far from perfect, but nonetheless they were able to perform. They could give the offering of the performance.[17] *Surely, as they dance more and as time passes then there will be opportunity to perfect the movements just like I was getting closer to perfecting the different parts of the puppet show. It happens all at once and then bit by bit.*

So, at class that day, Ibu Happy led me through the first 2/3 of a new dance she wanted to teach me. This one combined aesthetics of both male and female dances. It took me a while to understand the hand gestures for the section where I was kneeling. After a break, she finished showing me the dance. I was surprised, because unlike the other dance I had learned, this dance seemed to end off balance. The movements were all done on the right side of the stage, and there wasn't corresponding actions on the left. Most of the dances I had learned or seen often performed one set of movements on one side of the stage and then repeated them on the other. Maybe in this new dance something else is creating the balance so it does not need the similar movements to be performed on the left? (*Field Notes, April 2009*)

17 Giving a performance as an offering or community service is called *ngayah*, and this is an essential part of Balinese religion and social life.

Fig. 3 The author performing the dance "Panji Semirang" for a school celebration (Photo: Ni Nyoman Happy).

Unlike other art forms in Bali, gender is an important part of the aesthetics and meaning of dance and "gender identification in Balinese dance is animated by the belief system of the Balinese cultural tradition" (Dibia 1989, 10). Therefore, the movements and contents of the dance are pivotal for understanding gender in Bali. The dance I was learning in class that day was "Panji Semirang," created in 1942 by I Nyoman Kaler, a well-known dancer and choreographer. The Panji stories are a popular epic story cycle around Java, Bali, and Malaysia. They appear in many

different forms and versions. In this dance, the princess Candra Kirana is disguised as a male because she was banished from the kingdom by the jealous princess Galuh Ajeng. Like Robin Hood, the disguised Candra is a thief, stealing from the rich to give to the poor. At last, the prince Radan Inu travels to battle with this trouble-causing band of thieves (known as the Panji Semirang). During the battle he recognizes the face of his beloved Candra. The solo dance captures the strength and beauty of the princess disguised as a warrior. In their analysis of the story and its reception in Indonesia, Mu'Jizah[18] and Achadiati Ikram describe "Initially Candra Kirana is stereotypically presented as a beautiful, passive woman but, after suffering humiliation and despair, she manages to transform herself and become an active, courageous woman, perfectly able to defend her rank and uphold her self-esteem. This transformation of character becomes her driving force" (2020, 194). The movements of the dance draw from both male and female dance vocabularies to demonstrate the duality of her character. I now realized that the contrast between male and female parts of her character are especially emphasized in the movements at the end, which I initially perceived as "unbalanced" and "strange."

Time is Strange—Looking at the Present through the Past

A few pages into the novel, the narrative shifts to a flashback with the words, "Her past leapt suddenly to mind" (*Earth Dance*, 4) or *Masa lalu itu tiba-tiba saja meloncat dari otaknya* (*Tarian Bumi*, 3).The English translation suggest that the action then takes place in her mind, as a memory, but the Indonesian gives more agency to the past and that it appears suddenly, *tiba-tiba*, from (*dari*) her mind. It is consistent with Balinese perceptions of time and place to imagine past and present existing in a kind of duality; "Every dance and theatre form seems to overlap with an older or parallel form" (Siegel 1991, 85). Gestures, story, and character are linked but not linear. In Bali I have heard this described as the visible and invisible realms existing as parallel and

18 Often Javanese names do not have surnames. As is standard practice, I list her name as both her first name and last name in the works cited.

complementary. The past makes the logic of the present strange.

As a literary method, the lack of chronology within the novel creates a Brechtian kind of strangeness. Theatre theorist, playwright, and director Bertolt Brecht described how the *verfremdungseffekt* (V-effect) should alienate the audience so that they might view the events of the play with a critical distance. V-effect is often translated as "alienation effect," but a closer translation would be "making strange." The audience is encouraged to focus on how the events in the play happened, rather than thinking about what would happen next (Brecht 2013). Rusmini's nonlinear structure likewise creates a critical distance for the reader from the action of the story that reinforces the reader's ability to see gender as a specific kind of sign system. Theatre scholar Elin Diamond explores the potential within Brecht's theories to enable feminist point-of-view. She explains, "When gender is 'alienated' or foregrounded, the spectator is enabled to see a sign system *as* a sign-system" (1988, 85). Strangeness exposes the structures of power that would otherwise be invisible.

The meaning of time in the novel is also told through the images the words invoke in the reader's mind. In order to think through how Rusmini open the possibility of disrupting Balinese gender hegemony through visuality—I find a useful language within the theories of film scholar Laura Mulvey. Based within psychoanalysis Mulvey describes how looking itself is a source of pleasure rooted in both desire (for the female) and problematic identification of the female (for the male viewer). "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female" (2013, 62). This interpretation of how looking reinforces gender binary has an especially powerful resonance in Bali, where male and female are seen as two necessary and complementary parts of a whole, part of the Balinese philosophy of *Rwa Bhineda*.[19] *Rwa Bhineda* is a foundational belief within Balinese religion that explains how different ritual and artistic practices reinforce the importance of duality and balance. Applied to gender it emphasizes how unlike entities still maintain balance.

Through her use of visual language, Rusmini calls attention to

19 *Rwa Bhineda* is a foundational belief within Balinese religion. Different ritual and artistic practices reinforce the importance of duality and balance. For more on this, see Jenkins 2010.

the power of looking and upsets the correlation between looking and narrative control. For example, Telega is described as dancing the *oleg*, a duet of desire between a male and female bumble bee—"And when Telaga danced, the whole universe seemed to open up and give its blessing. Only through Telaga's body do the god's consider compromise" (*Earth Dance*, 13).[20] The onlookers are jealous of Telaga's beauty, that her dancing contains a power called *taksu*.

Taksu remains a somewhat elusive component or outcome of Balinese performance. The best performers are said to have *taksu*, which might be understood as a kind of stage presence. But it is more than that: "*taksu* is a kind of 'inner power' which is given intelligence, beauty, and miracle. In various kinds of Balinese cultural activities, *taksu* also means 'genuine creativity' that could give 'spiritual power' to the artist to express oneself to become 'greater' than one is in everyday life" (Suparta 2000, 247). Through *taksu*, dance enables the women to get what they want.

But, getting what you want is not always a good thing. The next paragraph shifts to an old women talking to Sadri, Telaga's childhood playmate who is among the onlookers. This time truth in seeing has a destabilizing element: "But who knows if she is happy? You only see her with your eyes. You know, Sadri, that the woman you see in all her glory onstage will have a hard life" (*Earth Dance*, 13).[21] The old woman emphasizes seeing, but what a person sees is not a dependable indicator of truth. Something might appear beautiful on the outside but still struggle and suffer on the inside. Beauty in dance gives the women in the novel the power to move from one caste to another, but that movement does not guarantee happiness. The words of the old woman would carry great weight in Bali—she wears white and embodies the qualities of the *luh luwih*, or wise woman. Dance might give the women the power to get what they want in marriage, but they are miserable. *Taksu* might come from the individual, but it is meant for the common good. Telaga is rewarded with extra money from her eager male audience, but she does not share those with the others in the group, as is custom. Dance

20 *Sepertinya, pada saat menari seluruh semesta memberi restu pada Telaga. Hanya pada tubuh Telaga para dewa mau kompromi* (*Tarian Bumi*, 4).

21 *Siapa yang tahu kebahagiaannya? Kau hanya melihat dengan mata telanjang. Kau tahu, Sadri, perempuan yang menari itu adalah perempuan yang kelak memiliki perjalanan yang sangat berat* (*Tarian Bumi*, 5).

might be a system of trespassing, but it does not guarantee happiness. Instead, Rusmini's story suggests other possibilities for the power, or trespassing, within strangeness.

Strange Beauty and Strange Desire

Telega's mother, Luh Sekar, was not born in the noble classes. She was born a Sudra and had always dreamed of, and finally succeeds, in elevating her status through marriage. Sekar is estranged from society; Sekar's family was involved in a village scandal. Her father was killed in 1965 because he was suspected of being a communist and this association taints the entire family. Historian Adrian Vickers describes Bali's involvement in this dark period of Indonesian history:

> Bali was one of the major foci of violence after the unsuccessful Coup by the Thirtieth of September Movement in 1965. Approximately one-tenth of the 500,000-1,000,000 killed for links to Communism in Indonesia were Balinese—a number far out of proportion to Bali's size compared to the rest of Indonesia. [. . .] Rarely do these debates surface in writing... More often they exist as gossip (1998, 775–76).

And that gossip can have real-world consequences lasting for generations. Sekar might be beautiful, but her past makes her strange, and she is shunned for that strangeness. Sekar hopes to escape not just the poverty of the Sudra caste, but to remove herself from her family altogether.

Like how a *wayang kulit* performance depends on both visual and aural elements to perform a story, Sekar demonstrates how words might bring the power of beauty into being. Sekar often complains to Kenten that she hates being poor and wants to marry a man who will move her up in caste. In doing so, Sekar activates the passive objecthood of beauty and gains agency by using her voice. Her friend, Kenten, scolds: "Mind your tongue Sekar. We're in a temple. What if the gods hear what you are saying?" To which Sekar exclaims, "Let them hear! At every full moon I pray and plead for my wish to be fulfilled…" (*Earth Dance*, 25).[22]

Sekar's insistence on voicing her desires, especially to the gods, is

22 *"Kamu jangen bicara ngawur, Sekar. Ini di pura, aku takut para dewa mendengar pernyataanmu." "Aku tak peduli! Aka malah berdoa dan memohon setiap purnama, bulan terang…"* (*Tarian Bumi*, 22).

not appropriate behavior for a woman. In Balinese society, women are granted a public voice only through their father or husband. In the context of the *pura*, or temple, the voice carries a greater significance because it is connected to ritual power. Her friend Kenten parallels Sekar's inappropriate desire.

Luh Kenten, complicates the relationship to beauty and gender ideals in Bali. She is not a dancer but is stubborn and strong with the strength of many men. She is also beautiful in a unique way. Kenten does not feel comfortable in her own body, because she experiences the typical qualities of beauty as horrors. These are also the qualities that emphasize a woman's role as mother:

> There were two mounds of flesh on her chest that made her feel uncomfortable and uneasy. She needed folds and folds of material to cover them. And then there was the blood that flowed from between her legs each month. Gushing out! (*Earth Dance*, 31)[23]

Kenten experiences her body as strange, and others comment that Kenten is even stranger because she does not have feelings for men but rather desires women. Other women in the village suspect Sekar and Kenten are in a relationship, Kenten overhears them at the market "'They must be having an affair. How shocking! How do they fulfill the other's needs? Do they touch each other like I touch my man?'" (*Earth Dance*, 31).[24] In a society where full membership in the community is dependent upon marriage, Kenten would remain outside, remain a stranger.

Sekar was strange when she spoke her desires aloud to the gods, but her voice makes Kenten strange as well.

> "Sekar!" The voice of Kenten was heard to be **rough and unrefined**. The eyes of the young women opened wide (my translation).[25]
>
> *"Sekar!" Suara Kenten terdengar* ***keras****. Mata perempuan muda itu mendelik* (*Tarian Bumi*, 22).

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23 *Ada dua gumpalan daging yang menyembul di dadanya. Gumpalan daging yang membuatnya merasa tidak bebas. Daging itu sangat mengganggu, karena diperlukan dilembar-lembar kain untuk menutupnya. Belum lagi tiap bulan ada darah yang mengalir semuanya sendiri. Darah yang mengalir semuanya sendiri!* (*Tarian Bumi*, 30–31).

24 *Mereka menjalin cinta. Mengerikan. Bagaimana cara mereka memenuhu kebuthan mereka sebagai manusia? Apa mereka melakukan persentuhan itu seperti aku melakukannya dengan laki-laki?* (*Tarian Bumi*, 30).

25 I use my own translation here because the English version of the novel does not include reference to Kenten's voice, which is key to my analysis.

The dichotomy between refined and unrefined (*alus* and *kasar*) is a key principle in Balinese (and Indonesian) aesthetics. These traits can be expressed through the body—how a person acts, and how a person's voice sounds or what level of language they use (Balinese has several distinct levels of language that are determined by the relative status between speakers). *Keras*, like *kasar*, is also in opposition to *alus*. *Alus* presents an ideal for women as passive, submissive, small, and beautiful.[26] *Kasar* is a trait associated with masculinity; women are not supposed to be *kasar* (Benamou 2002, 274). Assigning the adjective *kasar* to Kenten's voice emphasizes how unnatural or strange she is.

Finally, Kenten exclaims to Sekar, "You're getting stranger and stranger everyday" (*Earth Dance*, 30).[27] In the Indonesian the tension keeps emphasizing the visual versus what is said and heard, first Kenten exclaims, "You are beginning to speak that which is strange/crazy/unnormal" or, *Kau mulai bicara yang aneh-aneh* (*Tarian Bumi*, 27). The focus of strangeness dwells in between the realms of something one *is* versus something one does through words and gestures.

In the novel, the earth, or *bumi*, represents embracing the difficulties of life. Kenten warns Sekar about how difficult life will be if she becomes the wife of Ida Bagus Pidada, a known womanizer with a nasty personality. Sekar counters that it would be worth it to live in the *griya*; she is willing to suffer for the life she desires—"Life has taught me to be a rock, because rocks do not complain" (*Earth Dance*, 72).[28] In Indonesian, the word *bumi* is more expansive than rock. *Bumi* means the earth and the soil. Within Balinese ritual, the feet have a special relationship with the ground, or *bumi*. When a child is born in Bali, they are not allowed to touch the ground until they are about three months old. There is a fear that the baby's spirit is still too connected to the invisible world, and that touching the ground puts her life in danger. At three months a special ceremony often called *Telubulan* (Balinese for three months) is conducted. In the ceremony sometimes the child is officially given his/her name and is considered sufficiently connected to the visible world so that there is no longer danger of rushing back to the spirit

26 Men can also be *alus*, such as the hero Arjuna from the *Mahabharata*.
27 *Makin hari kau makin aneh* (*Tarian Bumi*, 30).
28 *"Hidup telah mengajari aki jadi batu"* (*Tarian Bumi*, 84).

world. A priest will offer blessings, and the family will dress the baby in traditional clothes (*pakian adat*). At the center of the ceremony the family lowers the baby and her feet make contact with the ground for the first time.[29] Likewise for Sekar, invoking a rock as her future identity indicates a transition from one realm to another.

Once Sekar realizes her dream to become a dancer and marry a Brahmin, Kenten disappears from the narrative. There is not yet room for desire and agency such as Kenten, but her character mirrors the unstable identity of the author. In an interview with the *Jakarta Post*, Oka Rusmini explains:

> "When I was 4, I used to dance the ballet, before I was crippled by polio. I couldn't dance anymore. Plus, my parents' marriage was a train wreck and I was taken away by my grandparents. From then on, I started to live in a solitude that could not be resolved and I couldn't tell anyone about this; I trusted nobody," Oka told *The Jakarta Post*. Thankfully, she said her family was able to fill the emptiness with books and a typewriter. This was when she started to find her voice through writing (Partogi 2017).

Rusmini experienced dance as loss, her body no longer able to perform, and that was coupled with shifting family and shifting culture. Moving from cosmopolitan Jakarta to a traditional family compound in Bali would also be strange indeed. I find that Kenten's frustration and unfulfilled desire becomes a possible way for Rusmini to explore the strangeness that she also experienced in society and within her body. Thinking back to my conversations with Ibu Happy and how Pangi Semirang ends with the unbalanced movements leads me to offer another insight into this kind of strangeness. The princess can experience a different kind of power when she is disguised as a robber, but it is at the end of the dance where the promise of reunification with her prince lies. This is where the dance destabilizes because relationships with men and therefore within hegemonic culture are problematized. The strong movements she dances as a robber are cut off. The dance ends and the character disappears, too strange to continue in a world of marriage and motherhood.

29 There is great variance within Balinese culture, and I hesitate to make universal assumptions or declarations about "the Balinese."

Resisting Beauty and Embracing Strangeness

Strangeness creates a space for power, but that space is still limited by gender:

I couldn't believe it had happened again. One of my professors, Dr. M—, came to Bali to visit (*he had a grant to learn about Indonesian music*). *I was delighted to show him around because it was his first time to Indonesia. Today we went to a seminar that was happening at the museum. In attendance were many Indonesian academics and artists, several of them I had met before. I was excited to show what I had learned, and to serve as a translator for my visitor. But it was like I was invisible. The other artists and academics would hardly acknowledge me, and they spoke to Dr. M— as if he was the knowledgeable scholar, even though Balinese art and culture was new to him. I often felt in moments like this my role was unclear. I am a foreigner, but I speak Indonesian and Balinese. I am a woman, but I am studying wayang and would often go to watch puppet performances late at night* (*most women did not go*). *I am unmarried, a student, but also a scholar. I constantly feel I am negotiating different identities—I feel so strange.* (*Fieldnotes, July 11, 2009*)

Telaga's mother worried about her daughter's future and hoped she would "become the most beautiful woman on the face of the Earth" (*Earth Dance*, 64)[30] in order to escape the kind of struggles she faced. To achieve this, she invited the best dance teacher, Luh Kambren, to come to the *griya* every day to teach Telaga. Luh Kambren looked into her student's eyes and realized that this was the dancer to whom she would finally be able to pass on her *taksu*, her power.

Luh Kambren was ugly, thin and sickly, before she became a dancer, blessed by the gods. Her village had been struck by illness and the priests revealed that only a new temple, built for the god of dance, would bring healing. At its completion, "young girls who had previously not been able to dance at all could suddenly dance beautifully" and this included Kambren (*Earth Dance*, 66). Even after the other girls got married, Kambren remained single and was known for her dancing and teaching. Unlike the other women in the novel who married because of dance, Kambren remains single because of the dance.

30 *Jadi perempuan tercantik di seluruh bumi ini* (*Tarian Bumi*, 75).

The relationships between dance, desire, bodies and the power of seeing are emphasized through the character of Kambren. Foreign movies about Bali featured her as a dancer—"They felt that Bali existed in Kambren's body" (*Earth Dance*, 81).[31] It is not like Kambren couldn't have married, she had many suitors, and it was rumored that even a king once proposed. She told Telaga, "I'm still a virgin, *Tugeg*. No man has ever touched this body" (*Earth Dance*, 80).[32] For Kambren, love was strange; the book describes different relationships with foreigners. One is a German painter, but Kambren dismisses him because she can't stand his eyes, "ready to devour the choicest parts of the female anatomy" (*Earth Dance*, 82).[33] A Dutch woman friend confronts Kembran, saying her rejection of the German painter was hasty. The woman then exclaims, "If I were a man, I would force you to marry me" and kisses Kambren with passion (*Earth Dance*, 82).[34] The woman departs promising to paint Kambren in her imagination. In each encounter, Kambren claims power over her body by resisting the gaze of others, but it is the resistance that makes her strange.

Finally, Kambren experiences feelings of love for a French photographer, Jean Paupiere. His camera bore into her soul, and "they spoke with their eyes or with intricate gestures" (*Earth Dance*, 83).[35] Even though Kambren admits to loving Jean, the French photographer, it does not bring her happiness. Recounting the story to Telaga, Kambren exclaims, "It was truly a strange relationship. That was the first time I realized the meaning of 'love.' But the price was high and painful" (*Earth Dance*, 84).[36] Jean was close friends with the German painter with the eyes. The painter married another dancer Kambren knew named Luh Dampar, but the relationship ended in tragedy. Luh Dampar killed herself in the painter's studio; around the studio were paintings and videos showing Luh Dampar

31 *Orang-orang asing itu selalu merasa Bali benar-benar ada dalam peta tubuh Kembran* (*Tarian Bumi*, 97).

32 *Tiang masih perawan, Tugeg. Tidak ada laki-laki yang pernah menyentuh tiang* (*Tarian Bumi*, 95).

33 *Mata yang amat tajam dan siap menguliti bagian-bagian tertentu tubuh perempuan* (*Tarian Bumi*, 98).

34 *Andaikata aku seorang laki-laki, aku akan memaksamu untuk menikah denganku* (*Tarian Bumi*, 91).

35 *Mereka berbicara lewat mata,atau dengan gerak-gerak yang begitu rumit* (*Tarian Bumi*, 100).

36 *Hubungan yang benar-benar aneh. Itulah untuk pertama kali tiang sadar, ini yang dimanai percintaan. Begitu mahal dan sangat menyakitkan* (*Tarian Bumi*, 100).

naked and being sexually violated for her husband's "art." One video showed Jean and the German painter having sex together. Even after the German painter was locked away, the paintings remained a popular topic with art aficionados and scholars, "but none of them was ever able to look deeper, to realize that Luh Dampar's scream's were locked in those paintings" (2011, 85).[37] These different stories of love all emphasize the power of vision, but in pain, the voice is silent.

Elaine Scarry describes the connection between the body, pain, and power that is useful here. "Intense pain is world destroying" (1985, 29) and that "in serious pain the claims of the body utterly nullify the claims of the world" (1985, 33). Through these examples, Kambren troubles the equation of dance with beauty that can empower love. Even with all of her awards from dancing, Kambren remained unhappy. Telaga finds this "strange," but also sees how her teacher lives in poverty. The body of the dancer represents Bali, the earth, but it is constantly desired through the optic realm that strives to silence the voice through pain and suffering. Love/pain destroy the world/earth. Kambren's words and experiences are a warning to Telaga and three days after sharing this story, Kambren was found dead from a heart attack.

Feet, Trespassing, and Ritual

Telaga seems destined to follow in the footsteps of these women: dancing, falling in love with a man of a different caste/nationality, and being stuck in unhappiness. After the death of her teacher, Telaga feels like she is suffocating in the *griya*, and constantly argues with her mother. Telaga tries to find her own way to freedom, and she finds her answer in Wayan Sasmitha, a painter she knew since she was young because he often visited the *griya* to talk with her grandfather, another painter. Once, her grandfather posed them together for a painting, dressed in costumes for dance. As they posed she would steal glances over to Wayan, making her body shiver. Eventually, they both reveal their feelings, even though the families try to discontinue the relationship by sending Wayan to Japan to study art. It doesn't matter, Telaga asserts agency to marry the man

37 *Tapi tidak seorang pun yang mampu melihat lebih jauh, bahwa dalam lukisan itu ada jerit Luh Dampar* (*Tarian Bumi*, 102–03).

she loves. Once again, beauty becomes the means to trespass to another place, to dance to a different, albeit lower social sphere. But Telaga is not worried, she imagines that love will surpass the material circumstances of her new home.

Telaga does not find happiness in her new home with Wayan and his mother and sister. The book details Telaga's struggle to adjust to the little food and lack of comforts like a hot bath. Also, her new family and other villagers treat her with suspicion, they do not trust this stranger in their midst. Soon after Telaga becomes pregnant, Wayan dies suddenly. Misfortune continues to befall the family and finally Telaga's mother-in-law declares Telaga must complete the ritual severing her from her Brahmin family and caste in order to stop their misfortunes.

The final paragraphs of the novel resituate the experience within the body and further complicate the relationships between dance, beauty, and power. In the ritual Telaga must return to her family home, the *griya*, and beg leave-taking. Once again, feet are an essential element of the ritual. Through a ceremony with a priest, her mother/an old woman enacts stepping on her head, physically expressing Telaga's permanent banishment:

> The priest's holy water poured over her body, slicing her like a thousand spears. Telaga shivered.
>
> "I was never asked to be born as Ida Ayu Telaga Pidada. Since life forced me to play that part, I played it convincingly. And so life must take responsibility for my starring role as Telaga." Telaga mumbled to herself as she allowed the old woman to wash her feet over her head—so she could be born again a new woman.
>
> A commoner! (*Earth Dance*, 146)

> *Air itu mulai menguassai tubuhnya seperti ratuasan tombak tajam, Telaga menggigil.*
>
> *"Aku tidak pernah meminta peran sebagai Ida Ayu Telaga Pidada. Kalaupun hidup terus memaksaku memainkan peran itu, aku harus* ***menjadi lakon*** *yang baik. Dan hidup harus bertanggung jawab atas permainan gemilangku sebagai Telaga."*
>
> *Telaga berguman, membiarkan perempuah tua itu mencuci kaki di ubun-ubunnya untuk menjelmakan dirinya menjadi perempuan baru. Perempuan Sudra.* (*Tarian Bumi*, 175)

Most commentary on the novel reads this moment as an elevation of the Sudra caste and therefore a subversion of the caste system. Through this moment, and the others in the novel, I would argue that it is more

important to focus back on gender and its relationship to caste within Balinese society. The described actions of the ritual and Telaga's responses demonstrate a resistance to the body—holy water is a symbol of Balinese religion (and in the Indonesian the passive voice removes the priest from the action) and it cuts her body, thus severing Telaga from systems of beauty and dance. The past as performance is further emphasized within the language of a "role" and *lakon*, a kind of script for performance. In the Indonesian she is not "born" but rather becomes *menjadi*, thus removing her from the system of reincarnation, or rebirth. Telaga is not just a Sudra (a role that it has already been demonstrated she does not easily or happily conform to), but rather she is a stranger. Her husband's family might now be able to better accept her, but the strangeness Telaga feels will persist.

I want to return to the global context and the larger question of how strangeness relates to and enables trespassing. Rusmini draws on her own experiences and often says the aim of her work is to reveal a truth about gender and caste in Bali. Yet the culture she shows in *Earth Dance* is both familiar and strange—perhaps as she felt it herself, and as I have in my many visits and stays on the island. That same strangeness shimmers through Balinese dance, as if each gesture breathes the very contradictions her words describe. In his examination of the history of Balinese dance, Mark Hobart (2007, 115–16) writes that many dances popular today emerged as a combination of a desire to attract tourists, to appease arts aficionados abroad, and to satisfy Balinese creativity. Dance in Bali separated from (just being) ritual and became political.

The path of the stranger, however, might be one of radical insight and membership into multiple "home" cultures. Anthropologist Deirdre A. Meintel writes about the phenomenon of cultural shock and returning home:

> I will suggest some generalizations about the experience of the stranger abroad and upon his return that bring both aspects into a single perspective. In short, I propose that the most important "shocks" to be encountered by those who enter another culture or subculture are those of self-discovery. Revelations about oneself may become clear only upon return home; moreover they may also be engendered by everyday social experiences in one's own cultural setting (1973, 47).

In different ways, Telaga, Rusmini, and I share the experiences of these kind of "shocks." It made Telaga tremble. But through the feet, in travel or dance, strange encounters create opportunities to trespass beyond both the confines of tradition and global modernity into a third space.

BY TRAIN

3. Trains across Space and Time

When I was growing up, one of my favorite books was the story of "The Little Engine that Could." My grandma would often read it to me before bed.

> A little railroad engine was employed about a station yard for such work as it was built for, pulling a few cars on and off the switches. One morning it was waiting for the next call when a long train of freight-cars asked a large engine in the roundhouse to take it over the hill. "I can't; that is too much a pull for me," said the great engine built for hard work. Then the train asked another engine, and another, only to hear excuses and be refused. At last in desperation the train asked the little switch engine to draw it up the grade and down on the other side. "I think I can," puffed the little locomotive, and put itself in front of the great heavy train. As it went on the little engine kept bravely puffing faster and faster, "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can." Then as it near the top of the grade, that had so discouraged the larger engines, it went more slowly, but still kept saying, "I—think—I—can, I—think—I—can." It reached the top by dint of brave effort and then went on down the grade, congratulating itself, "I thought I could, I thought I could." "Thinking One Can" (anonymous 1906)[1]

As vehicles of trespassing, trains are a transportation of "I think I can, I think I can," that suggest possibility and progress. In the opening scenes of the film *Bumi Manusia* (*Earth of Mankind*),[2] a steam engine train pulls

1 The story of the Little Engine has been retold in multiple versions. I quote the one found here: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Thinking_One_Can

2 The movie was adapted from the renowned novel by Pramoedya Ananta Toer Pramoedya Ananta Toer (1925–2006) was an Indonesian writer, intellectual, and political dissident known for his powerful novels and outspoken criticism of colonialism and authoritarianism. Despite being imprisoned for over a decade without trial, he produced some of his most important work, including the Buru Quartet, which was originally composed orally while in detention. *This Earth of Mankind* is the first novel in the Buru Quartet, chronicling the life of Minke, a Javanese student navigating Dutch colonial society in early twentieth-century Indonesia. I discuss the novel in more detail in the Introduction.

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into the city—a striking symbol of modernity and global connection. The film's protagonist, Minke, is also shown traveling by train to visit his parents, underscoring how the railway links tradition and modernity as he navigates both worlds. Those scenes in the movie reflect how development of the railway in nineteenth-century Java marked Indonesia's early participation in the global industrial revolution, placing it well ahead of much of the surrounding region. In 2023, a new high-speed railway, called the Whoosh Train,[3] now connects Jakarta and Bandung in forty-five minutes—making it one of the fastest trains in the world.

In this chapter, I engage with history of the train in Indonesia as a symbol of progress, and the use of the train, or train-like imagery, as a certain kind of visual signifier within film. Historian Howard Dick (2000) describes how different forms of transportation relate to Indonesia's economy and social networks. Faster and more efficient than boat transportation, railways were built along rivers to move large loads from one side of Java to the other. Trains though, struggled to compete with other kinds of land transportation that were cheaper and nimbler. Even so, trains and other forms of transportation complemented each other and fostered each other's growth. Buses, cars, and bicycles all competed in the marketplace, forming an integrated network allowing passengers and goods to flow all over the island. For Dick, the history of the railway system in Indonesia demonstrates complex dynamics between colonial/European influences, impact of government and other elite desires, with the flexibility of local people to adapt and reinvent themselves within changing contexts.

Around the world, the railway has also long served as a powerful symbol in film and literature, representing movement, transition, and the forces of modernity. Trains are romantic and industrial, once a sign of progress, they now invoke nostalgia. Trains also "haunt the history of cinema," more than any other form of transportation (Kirby 1997, 1). Since the Lumière brothers in Paris charged one franc to eager spectators to be amazed by "The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat," movies have incorporated trains into their stories and spectacle.

Because trains and movies are so intertwined, it is fitting that this chapter focuses on film. The first, *Anak Anak Srikandi* (*Children of*

3 "Whoosh" is an acronym for "Waktu Hemat, Operasi Optimal, Sistem Hebat," which translates to "time-saving, optimal operation, outstanding system."

Srikandi) uses a series of vignettes to depict the lives of "women-who-love-women" in Indonesia. The stories were written by a collective of women, in collaboration with two German filmmakers, about their lives. They worked together on the segments and experimented with different styles of cinematic storytelling to show that "transformation is always inscribed in the narrative; form and identity are fluid; perspectives are shifted" (*Srikandi* Press Packet). The women's stories describe how they overcame discrimination, rape, and other acts of physical and mental brutality. Interwoven among the individual stories, are scenes from a *wayang*, or shadow puppet, play about the trans woman warrior Srikandi, a mythic character from the *Mahabharata.*

The second film I will focus on, *Marlina si Pembunuh dalam Empat Babak* (*Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts*), is a rape-revenge fantasy in the style of an American Western movie. In each of these two films, "the cinema finds an apt metaphor in the train, in its framed, moving image, its construction of a journey as an optical experience, the radical juxtaposition of different places"(Kirby 1997, 2). In the films I examine, trains are more than a mode of transportation; they enable me to highlight the performative way the audience engages with the film as narratives of trespassing.

Even though only *Children of Srikandi* has literal trains, images of travel in both films across vast landscapes offer the vehicle for the women to trespass out of the oppression in their lives. This chapter follows the tracks of that movement, reading trains, roads, and geographies (imagined and real) as sites of resistance within the unstable experience of films and railroads.[4]

Borrowing the structure of a train journey, I pause at several "stations" to explore how travel, both literal and symbolic, allows for new forms of agency and storytelling. I am looking for moments of "instability," that enable the movement of trespassing. Thus, I use the actual and metaphorical trains to think through trespassing as a shift from "I think I can" to "I could."

4 Film scholar Lynne Kirby describes: "In cinema, instability is built into the basis of the filmgoing experience: the perceptual illusion of movement is tied to the physical immobility of the spectator and to the sequential unfolding of a chain of still images that constitute the basis of every film. The degree to which that instability was either controlled or exploited is a central issue for both the railroad and the cinema" (Kirby 1997, 3).

Station One: Looking Out to the World

After the opening credits, the movie *Children of Srikandi* transitions to a shot of the street of a small neighborhood in Yogyakarta. Cars and people on motorbikes drive past, a boy looks at the camera and waves as he says *hallo dunia*, or "hello world," as if to hail or interpolate the voyeurism of the camera that makes him the subject of a global gaze. Often, I have been greeted with "hi mister! hello! how are you?" anytime I walk along a similar Indonesian street. In the film, however, the greeting is expanded; and in Indonesian. This moment at the beginning of the film, makes the viewer aware they are not only watching a film, but that the film is watching them. The movie does not provide an unmediated view of women's gender and sexuality in Indonesia, but rather is part of a larger global network of films. As Louis Althusser (2014) describes, it is through the hail that a subject is made.

The two films at the center of this chapter must be understood not only within the context of Indonesian filmmaking as a global practice, but also within broader circuits of transnational cinema. Both works involve international collaborators or training, and both achieved greater success at festivals and in foreign independent markets than in mainstream Indonesian commercial theaters. While the films aim to represent distinctly Indonesian contexts, they are also shaped by, and contribute to, global conversations about gender, sexuality, and film. Like the development of the railroad, these films circulate locally while intentionally operating within larger structures of global progress and cultural exchange.

The process and content of *Children of Srikandi* reflects tensions of local and global that are part of the Indonesian film industry at large. The movie was developed during a two-year collaboration between German filmmakers Angelika Levi and Laura Coppens and a group of Indonesian women who signed up for a filmmaking workshop—known as the Children of Srikandi Collective. Individual stories, told with a variety of filmmaking strategies, were written and acted by the workshop participants. They are based on the artists' own lives and experiences, but they are also artistic creations.[5] Between the stories,

5 Coppens (2012 and 2015) provides detailed description and analysis of the collaboration and making of the film, so although I reference this when important, my focus is on understanding how those film choices communicate as an artistic and cultural text. Authorship is an important part of that discussion, and there was some disagreement among the participants.

a shadow puppetry, *wayang kulit*, performance of the story of Srikandi is presented by Soleh, the *dalang*, or puppeteer, and the singer Anek. Srikandi is a woman warrior character from the *Mahabharata*, and although there are several different versions of the story, she is known for breaking boundaries of gender in Indonesia.[6] In the press kit for the film, Soleh and Anek are described as "male to female transgendered people that have worked for many years as *wayang kulit* performers in Surabaya, East Java.... Srikandi is embodied and represented by them as an inverted mirror image where the narrative of the *wayang kulit* moves from fiction to documentary and from the past into the present."

Children of Srikandi, like queer identities, exists in a liminal space. In her dissertation on queer film activism in Indonesia, Laura Coppens describes that the idea for the film project in 2008 was a response to the observation that there were no lesbian stories from Indonesia at a queer film festival in Jakarta. "Only when I was back in Berlin did I hit on the idea of organizing a filmmaking workshop in Jakarta that ideally would result in a film by, about, and for Indonesian lesbians" (2015, 3). The movie both reflects and is part of Indonesia's alternative film scene, which Coppens defines as "a loose aesthetic movement of young cultural workers, including directors, writers, producers, video activists, and curators, primarily in their early twenties to mid-thirties" that actively engages in defining what it means to be Indonesian (2015, 7–8). In an overview of the field of Indonesian film studies, Intan Paramaditha (who wrote the novel that is the focus of Chapter 1 in this book) explains how after the New Order young film makers were articulating different Indonesian identities within an intentionally global context,

> [t]here was a sense of rupture when the new generation stepped in because they introduced a different working culture; they made films outside the conventional production and distribution channels, and they celebrated the idea that "everyone can make movies" without having to go through the apprenticeship system. Members of this generation made their own films and film festivals as well as establishing new audiences and film communities. They also embrace a more cosmopolitan worldview in terms of trajectories and references, including international film festivals and global aesthetic styles (2017, 363).

6 I focus on Srikandi and how the character is used in the film in greater detail in the article "(Re)Writing Srikandi: How Tradition Gives Performance Power for Women in Indonesia," forthcoming in *Asian Theatre Journal*.

The boy's hailing, *hallo dunia*, represents film makers, audiences, and critics from Indonesia to the world.

Children of Srikandi as a product of international collaboration and circulation reflects the ways gay and lesbian identities in Indonesia are articulated as part of, and against global LGBTQ politics. By using the story of Srikandi as a thread throughout the film, Coppens intended to show that "same-sex love and gender variety is not a 'Western import' [...] but an ancient aspect of Indonesian society" (2015, 59). Same-sex desire and relationships together with different gender identities have a long and varied history in Indonesia. Anthropologists and cultural scholars writing about sexuality and gender in Indonesia note a fluidity, often called pluralism, between various terms that are emic, variations on global terms, or those same terms.[7]

Coppens saw the film as part of a larger system of resistance against heteronormativity in Indonesia. Even so, *Children of Srikandi* must be understood within constant interactions among local, national, and global networks of identity and film activism and part of "a general interest in exchange between Indonesian and European documentary practitioners" (2015, 14, 60). Coppens explains that she describes the eight women in the film as "Indonesian women-who-love-women" to avoid essentializing Indonesian gender and sexual identities within Western terminology and paradigms (2015, 10). She, and the women in the film, however, also use lesbian, queer, and other descriptives. Throughout this chapter, I use the different terms used by Coppens and the women themselves, even while recognizing these may not be the most accurate reflection of how LGBTQ identities are understood and constructed within all of Indonesia. I foreground these interactions by focusing specifically on how references to travel, especially train travel, together with the film's active participation in global circuits of activism, offer trespassing as an active part of this resistance. Through these films, I theorize travel as offering an active alternative to *ikuti suami*, or "follow the husband," that is central to policies regarding women's gender and sexuality in Indonesia.[8]

7 The situation in Indonesia has changed significantly since the making of *Children of Srikandi* because the Indonesian penal code now criminalizes any sexual relations outside of marriage. For an excellent history of gender and sexuality in Southeast Asia, see Michael Peletz (2009). Jansen Wilke (2025) provides an insightful overview of contemporary queer identities and activism. In this chapter, I intentionally draw from scholars working during or right before the period of the film.

8 *Ikuti suami* is described by Julia I. Suryakusuma (1996, 100) as how "women's

Station Two: Contextualizing Representation in the Global Sphere

While *Children of Srikandi* emerged from Indonesia's independent film movement, *Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts*, written and directed by Mouly Surya, represents a more commercial and internationally oriented cinematic production.[9] Released in 2017, the movie was screened and won awards at both Asian and international festivals, such as Cannes Film Festival. Intan Paramaditha uses Marlina to introduce a feminist critique of how women's cinema in Southeast Asia uses transnational circuits of aesthetics and exchange to "challenge dominant discourses, reclaim cosmopolitan film aesthetics, navigate local and transnational structures of production, distribution, and exhibition, and forge trans-Asian connections" (2024, 70). Paramaditha focuses on "the privilege of class and cosmopolitanism," while acknowledging the real struggle women filmmakers face, especially in Southeast Asia, to be recognized and create successful careers. Like many of the other authors and artists I describe in this book, Surya depends on international opportunities for training and work.

Surya gets credit for making, what film reviewer Maggie Lee termed was the first "Satay Western."[10] Utilizing the aesthetics and structures of the American Western genre, the film follows the story of Marlina (Marsha Timothy), who lives in the shadow of her husband's preserved body. In the film's first act, Marlina is visited by a man named Markus (Egy Fedly) who promises that he and his friends will not only steal everything she owns but will rape her. The men arrive and demand she cooks them a meal of chicken soup before they get to work. She makes the soup and uses it to poison the band of thieves. Later she decapitates the man who tries to rape her. The other three acts of the movie follow her journey across the desolate Sumbanese countryside carrying the head

behavior and image" are within the ideology of State Ibuism. Coppens offers *ikuti istri* or "follow the wife" as an alternative (2015, 47), but I see the movement within the films as better expressed by *ikuti sendiri*, or "following the self."

9 The idea for the story came from well-known filmmaker Garin Nugroho when he visited Sumba and learned of several beheadings that were done as revenge killings.

10 2018 saw the release of another Western relocated to Indonesia. Made by Singaporean director Mike Wiluan, *Buffalo Bill* tells a colonial revenge story on the island of Java. It differed from *Marlina* because it was filmed in a studio and featured editing with quick transitions. So far, those are the only two satay Westerns.

of her victim to the police station. Along the way, she meets her friend Novi (Dea Panendra), who is nine "going on ten" months pregnant. Critics praise the film for its beautiful cinematography, fun music, dark humor, and well-developed and expertly acted characters; that it is both uniquely Indonesian while maintaining a universal appeal.

Marlina the Murder in Four Acts (hereafter called *Marlina*) was only Surya's third film. Born in Jakarta and initially educated in media and literature at Swinburne University (Melbourne), she switched to major in film after ending up in the director's seat to help some friends make a movie for a school project. She went on to earn an MA in Film and Television from Bond University (Queensland). Surya has brought Indonesian narratives to international stages—her debut, the thriller *Fiksi* (2008), earned her the Citra Award[11] for Best Director, and the romance/drama *What They Don't Talk About When They Talk About Love* (2003) became the first Indonesian title screened at Sundance. Since *Marlina*, she continues to direct films for Indonesian and international audiences, including *Trigger Warning* (2024).

Timing contributed to the movie's reception internationally because *Marlina* was released in the United States during the height of the #MeToo movement.[12] Surya in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times* described how this kind of problem, or abuse, of women has been around for a long time. "It is very real, it is very universal... and that one woman can inspire the next and that is what I was trying to say in the film." In the film, she flips how Western films are very masculine by focusing on female characters; there are very few men in the film. Surya continued explaining to the *Los Angeles Times*, "you probably notice in the film that women are always entering the house and exiting from the kitchen instead of from the front door. When you go to some traditional villages like this you would see that the women would gather at the back of the house; whereas, the men would gather at the front of the house" (2018). The way Surya positions Marlina's "universality" through its depiction

11 The Indonesian film award, similar to the Oscars.

12 The #MeToo movement, which began as a global reckoning against sexual harassment and assault, empowered individuals—particularly women—to speak out about systemic abuse and gender-based violence. In Indonesia, the movement gained momentum through social media, with survivors sharing their stories using hashtags like #MeToo and #KitaAgni, leading to increased public discourse around sexual violence and institutional accountability.

of "traditional" demonstrates the double-ways the movie must navigate positionality of the Other—both within an Indonesian framework and an international framework.

The location, or the landscape, of the film complicates the film's universality. Sumba, an island about the size of Bali, is part East Nusa Tenggara, which is more isolated and less developed the other parts of Indonesia. The landscape of Sumba, particularly in the north, is characterized by rugged hills and lush, verdant valleys that stretch toward the horizon. Rolling plains and scattered limestone formations create a striking, wild terrain that reflects the island's beauty and untamed spirit. The cinematography (developed by Surya with long-time collaborator, cinematographer Yunas Pasolong) received international acclaim. James Guild, writing for *The Medium*, is typical of *Marlina*'s reviews when he describes:

> this film is gorgeous. And it announces that it's going to be a languid, beautiful visual experience from the opening shot of the Sumba hills, wind-swept and browned. Cinematographer Yunus Pasolang shoots the hell out of the Sumba countryside, filling the screen with David Lean-style wide shots of dusty hills and winding roads and impossibly rustic landscapes. The film is sparse in that sense, and it often indulges in very long takes which is a style I personally love because it's old school and it announces a certain kind of confidence in what you are shooting. (2018)

But such praise overlooks the politics of representation and the exoticization of peripheral regions.

Paramaditha and other Indonesian film scholars have critiqued the film's representation of Sumba as Orientalist. They point to various inaccuracies such as:

- *Sup ayam* or "chicken soup" and *sate*, although they are quintessential Indonesian dishes, are not foods commonly eaten in Sumba.
- The depiction of wedding preparations are impoverished in comparison to typical lavish celebrations in Sumba.
- The practice of embalming (Marlina's dead husband is an embalmed corpse sitting in the corner of her house) is rarely practiced anymore because it is part of past animistic traditions; most of Sumba is now Christian.

- Novi greets her husband by kissing his hand, a common gesture in Muslim Indonesia, but not likely in Christian Sumba.
- None of the cast, except one child, were of Sumbanese ethnicity[13] (Lestari 2019, Ndoen 2023, Paramaditha 2024).

Indeed, even parts of the film that "get it right" are dismissed, as Umi Lestari complains: "all things that identified as 'Sumba' are merely accessories" (2019, 9). Sharon Y. X. R. Ndoen, writing for the critical website *Cine-Excess*, argues that these representations play into Javanese hegemony and privilege and serve to further marginalize Sumba, even while the film's non-Sumbanese artists enjoy commercial and artistic success (2023).

While acknowledging the very real and material disparities between Sumba and other outlier regions of Indonesia, as well as a longer history of cinematic Othering in Indonesia,[14] I want to approach the question of representation through the lens of cinema itself. There is a critical gap between the lived realities of Sumba and "the power of the film image to (mis)represent the material and social world," as well as cinema's capacity "to blur the boundaries of space and time, reproduction and simulation, reality and fantasy, and to obscure the traces of its own ideologically based production" (Hopkins 1994, 48). Marlina's portrayal of Sumba must therefore be understood not as an attempt at an authentic depiction, but as part of broader systems of power—including the transnational film circuit—and the specific aesthetics Surya constructs within it.

All of Surya's cinematic works exist within larger discourses about film practice and history in Indonesia. How to "represent" Indonesia, to itself and the world, has been a persistant concern throughout the history of Indonesian filmmaking. The debate often centers on a disparagement of films that are commercially successful in Indonesia versus arthouse films that circulate among international festivals (and are not popular with Indonesian audiences.) In 2008, Ekky Imanjaya, in an oft-cited article, essentializes this debate between commercial and artistic cinema. After the fall of the New Order, in 1998, a group

13 For a larger discussion on ethnicity and casting in Indonesia see Stolee 2024, 190–94.

14 Karl G. Heider gives an excellent overview of this history in chapter eight of *Indonesian Cinema: National Culture on Screen* (1991).

of filmmakers wrote a manifesto declaring the birth of the "I-Cinema," as a compromise to embrace both commercial and artistic goals while representing Indonesia. Imanajaya describes that the:

> "I" in "I-cinema" is ambiguous—it stands for the word "Indonesian" as much as it does for "Independent", as well as other terms like "eye" or even the English "I". I-cinema films are made in the spirit of independence and even individualism, but they are also national in character (2016).

Even though Indonesia makes over 100 movies a year, opportunities to see them outside the country is limited; nonetheless, given how few movie theaters still exist in the country, international distribution is not just prestigious, but financially essential. I find that *Marlina* sits in what Kenneth C. Griffin, in his recent dissertation on the film industry in Indonesia, describes as "middle cinema," which tries to find the sweet spot between local and global, filmmakers and audiences, and art and commerce (2024, 7).

I find that both literature and film navigate similar dynamics between local representation and international taste. Like literature, the most successful Asian films and filmmakers speak to international audiences. Speaking about literary translation, Tiffany Tsao describes the uneven hierarchy between the writers, translators, and who decides if something is "worthy" of the international market. To be "worthy" is to strike a balance between being accessible to a Western audience and maintaining a sense of the "orient" that makes the story interesting to that audience. As John McGlynn, founder and director of Lontar Foundation (a Jakarta-based NGO that distributes English translations of Indonesian literature) advises Indonesian authors seeking translation, "publishers aren't looking for you, they're looking for Indonesia" (2017). Surya suffers a similar trap: how to present Indonesia to both the world and to Indonesia? Keep in mind, as journalist Elizabeth Pisani reports, "Indonesia is probably the most invisible country in the world" (2014, 3).[15] Combining Indonesia and Westerns gives *Marlina* a balance between familiar and strange that navigates these different markets and desires.

15 Of course, I am simplifying a complex history of Indonesian cinema and its relationship to the West. For more about this discourse, Paramaditha (2017) gives an excellent overview of the history and historiography of Indonesian film-making and Film Studies.

The Western, one of the oldest and most flexible of film genres, is the aesthetic heart of the film. Like the I-Cinema, by selecting this genre Surya not only reaches across national borders, but grounds the artistry of the film. In an interview with *Vice*, Surya explained that style provided a solution to the story of the film because "she could not relate to the character of Marlina, this character who was raped and cut off his head." But, as Surya explained, "all of a sudden I found a new way to relate to the film, I mean because I thought, should I make this Western? When I first came to Sumba, I thought, 'This is so Western.' So these elements helped me relate to Marlina. It's more like slowly falling in love" (Rahad and Methanisa 2017). Understanding the Western's relationship to the American West suggests a parallel precedent to complicate how *Marlina* relates to Sumba.

For Americans, the West, especially as portrayed in the movies, was like how *Marlina* portrayed Sumba. Scholar Richard V. Francaviglia describes the overlap in the rhetoric and artistic creation between the Orient and the American West in many different media, including film. He argues that the American imagination presented the West as an exotic Other compared with the rest of the United States. The West was wild, untamed; and the people different, uncivilized and primitive, the habits and customs exotic and strange (2011). Jane P. Tompkins echoes the strange, uncivilized nature of the landscape in the Western:

> The desert offers itself as the white sheet on which to trace a figure. It is a tabula rasa on which man can write, as if for the first time, the story he wants to live. That is why the first moment of Western movies is so full of promise. It is the New World, represented here, not for the first time, as a void, the vacuum domicilium the Puritans had imagined, waiting to be peopled. The apparent emptiness makes the land desirable not only as a space to be filled but also as a stage on which to perform and as a territory to master (1993, ch. 3).

As I said, I am not trying to provide excuses for the (mis)representations of Sumba in *Marlina*, but rather to provide a possible insight to the various contexts and aesthetics that Surya was navigating. By approaching the movie as an Indonesian-take on a Western that would be targeted to an international market, it becomes possible to move beyond questions of authenticity to examine how the film reflects complex systems of Orientalism; of reality and fantasy.

Station Three: Heads and Revenge

Marlina begins with a rape-revenge and ends with a rape-revenge. In doing so, it not only turns the typical gender dynamic of the Western on its head but also challenges Indonesian patriarchy. In the movie's First Chapter: after poisoning most of the robbers with chicken soup, Marlina must confront Markus, the gang's leader, who is asleep in her room. She brings him a bowl of soup and tells him it's time to eat (hoping to poison him as well), but he grabs her arm, causing the bowl to spill. When she attempts to go to the kitchen for more, he forces her to sit beside him on the bed. He soon forces himself on her, raping her. Marlina lies motionless beneath him as he thrusts. The camera shifts away from the room to show the bodies of the other men lying on the floor. When it cuts back to the bedroom, the scene has changed: Marlina has flipped on top of him. The power dynamic reverses as she rides him, bringing him to the brink of climax. At that moment, she reaches for his machete and, with a single, decisive motion, beheads him.

In the Fourth Chapter, the film ends with a moment of symmetry that echoes its beginning. Marlina and her friend Novi have returned to the house when the last remaining robber, Franz (Yoga Pratama), arrives (he had been hunting Marlina down). He forces Novi to cook chicken soup and attempts to rape Marlina. Hearing Marlina's cries, Novi grabs the machete and bursts into the room. She strikes Franz with a swift blow. As Marlina pulls away, Novi finishes the beheading with a second, final swing.

Women enacting violence often make audiences cheer and critics nervous (McCaughey 2001, 2–3). Like other movies categorized as "rape-revenge" movies, Marlina exists in between celebration for empowering women against male-violence and criticism that argues such violence is contrary to feminist principles.[16] Was Marlina justified in her actions? Or was the beheading too violent to be appropriate for a woman? (Critics seem to focus on that; poisoning the four robbers is not subject to the same outrage. Perhaps the domesticity of making chicken soup canceled

16 It is not my purpose here to rehearse the various arguments about whether violence is an appropriate feminist response, although I do want to mention my bias that this seems to be a critique lobbed most often at women directors, even though there are many more and much more excessive examples of violence in film by men.

out the violence of the murders?) The movie's end is subject to its own debate as well, with one film critic concluding, "it felt gratuitous and antithetical to what the film was trying to do" (Omer 2017).[17]

But is it accurate to consider the film a rape-revenge, or even a revenge movie? Margrethe Bruun Vaage states that, "the rape-revenge film is defined by its two-part structure: the rape of the female protagonist, often depicted graphically, is followed by her revenge, typically very violent and portrayed in vivid detail too, as she tracks down her rapists to punish them" (2024, 1). If one focuses on *Marlina* as a rape-revenge movie, the potential for women to find empowerment in the plot becomes limited. Rather it would become stuck within an endless loop of rape/beheading, even though those moments do not take up most of the action. Marlina does not spend the movie seeking revenge, rather both moments of rape and revenge happen together; both are not premeditated. Instead, I focus on Marlina's journey, trespassing, as the key emancipatory action.

Marlina traveling across the Sumbanese countryside with the head takes up most of the film. Marlina carries it, visible to everyone, until eventually she wraps it in a cloth and puts it in a box. At the end of the movie, the head is returned to its owner (placed back on the corpse) and Marlina, with Novi and the new baby, depart on a motorcycle.

How might a focus on the head that Marlina carries enable a different reading than the revenge? Just as there is a rich history of rape-revenge narratives, especially in film, in art there are also many stories and images of women beheading men and then carrying the head away. Ostiane Moitry gives an excellent overview of women beheading men throughout art history that includes paintings from the Middle Ages until recently. Most of the paintings discussed include some version of the Biblical stories of Judith and Holofernes or Salome and John the Baptist—depicting women as the "*femme forte* (a pious and strong woman)" or "*the femme fatale* (a dangerous seductress)" (2021). The first time I became fascinated with these odd paintings was in a seminar while working on my PhD. The class was an interdisciplinary arts course examining spectacle during the Italian Renaissance; something well outside my own focus on tradition in contemporary Indonesia. While visiting my wife in NYC we went to the Metropolitan Museum of Art,

17 King and McCaughey give an excellent overview of both sides to this debate (2001).

which has a small yet interesting collection of art from that period. I saw many beautiful things but was especially struck by one of the paintings, "Salome with the Head of John the Baptist" by Andrea Solario. I was amazed to see, among such beautiful paintings, the grotesque image of a woman receiving a decapitated head on a platter.

To understand *Marlina* and the painting "Salome with the Head of John the Baptist" requires looking at beheadings more generally. "Beheading is among the most ancient, widespread, and enduring of human cultural practices. Examples occur in every place, time, and level of culture" (Janes 2005, 29). Regina Janes, in her historical and cultural study on beheadings, recognizes that in a beheading, a head is no longer just a head—it is now a sign, filled with meaning. Meaning comes from purpose, and she finds that:

> human cultures have elaborated five principal types of traditional, authorized beheadings: the ancestral head, removed after death, not taken by violence; the trophy head, taken in warfare or raid; the sacrificial head, taken from a living person by decapitation in the performance of a religious rite; the presentation head, taken in a political struggle to remove a contender or rival; the public execution, proceeding from a legal decision (2005, 14).

The head in *Marlina* is not an ancestral head or a sacrificial head. It could only be considered a public execution if the audience watching the film constitutes "the public." Furthermore, Marlina is denied any legal intervention when she visits the police station. For most of the film, the head is her trophy, which demonstrates the power of the person who took the head. In contrast, the presentation head is about the power of the person receiving the head. During her fieldwork in Sumba, anthropologist Janet Hoskins asked about a skull tree her guide showed her, to which the guide explained, "heroes take heads" (1987, 605). A presentation head is about giving power to the person receiving the head. When Marlina gives the head to Franz, she tries to entrust "men" with power, but he proves unworthy. He rapes Malina and becomes a trophy head himself.

Images of women and decapitated heads reflect gender dynamics. In the early twentieth century, there emerged "a vogue for representing decapitating ladies, focused particularly on Herodias and her daughter" at a time when the roles and rights of women was also seeing a reversal (Janes 2005, 97–98). But, the story of the painting I mentioned earlier

puts women in power. The painting is based on the story that recounts that Salome danced for the king and she was thus rewarded with a request. Salome's mother, Herodias, told her daughter to request John's head on a platter. Herodia wanted revenge on John because he had condemned Herodias's marriage to Herod as immoral.

Surya is not just blindly copying the Western, but rather she inverts the gendered power dynamic. Surya explains that "the people in Western films are cowboys with guns. They represent modernity—men who try to conquer barbarism and the lack of justice. Meanwhile in Sumba, the strongest 'characters' are women, who must face obstacles deeply rooted in patriarchy, which is another form of barbarism in everyday life" (Rahad and Methanisa 2017). As an outlier, like *Marlina*, Salome's head offers insight into gender dynamics. Examining some of over 2,000 paintings and other artworks on the subject, Regina Janes concludes it is possible to read decapitation as castration, creating a tension between male and female (2005, 126). She explains,

> With Medusa's head in mind, Freud insisted that dreams, fantasies, and representations of decapitation symbolized the primordial masculine terror of castration, loss of the penis that defined the boy's (masculine) identity and differentiated him from castrated females, especially his mother (Janes 2005, 136).

By traveling with the head, Marlina inverts the power dynamic between men and women.

Station Four: Trains

"One of the strategies deployed by [director] Mouly Surya is to explore the relationship between characters and the landscape" (Paramaditha 2024, 75). Inspired by the landscape, rather than a revenge movie, I propose *Marlina* is better understood as a train, or "Union Pacific" Western. These movies feature trains and railways in various ways, including train robbery and chases—one of the first Western films was the *Great Train Robbery* (1903). Train movies also often highlight the power differences in class and race with an emphasis on the role of the landscape within the film's narrative (Hall 2014). There are no actual trains in *Marlina*, but the winding roads, traveled by trucks, motorcycles, and horses, serve the same purpose in most of Indonesia.

Just as trains in the United States represented real as well as imagined progress and connection, in Indonesia transportation services of many kinds, from horse cart to small buses, quickly expanded (Dick 2006, 191). These vehicles, moving across the landscape in the film, like a train in a Western, are a "visual motif wherein a railroad stretching from the point of view to the horizon is used as a symbol of a long journey ahead or maybe of the vast world outside. [It] usually evokes feelings of adventurous thrill and romantic exploration" (TV Tropes). The revenge might have flipped the gender dynamic on its head, so to speak, but the landscape allows Marlina to be subversive in a different way—to challenge the Western as "a space of male action" (Lusted 2003, 24). The use of the landscape in the film, not the head, enables trespassing.

The film opens with the landscape; in the distance, along the horizon line, travels a man on a singular motorcycle. Such landscapes in the Western are often coded as masculine power:

> The ethical system the Western proposes, which vindicates conflict, violence, and vengeance, and the social and political hierarchy it creates, putting adult white males on top with everyone else in descending order beneath—this code and this hierarchy never appear to reflect the interests or beliefs of any particular group, or of human beings at all, but seem to have been dictated primordially by nature itself... the Western naturalizes a certain racial, gender, and ethnic type as hero. There is no need to say that men are superior to women, Anglos to Mexicans, white men to black; the scene has already said it. (Tompkins 1993, 73, 75)

It is from the land that Markus and the other robbers will come, to take from Marlina; and then it is to the land they will return.

Although Marlina's house is not a fancy parlor, it is still coded as the feminine space in the film. Others have written how Marlina takes control of such interior space; Paramaditha writes that "In disrupting the traditional relationship between character and landscape, Mouly Surya interrogates the private-public divide. Strategies of resistance are not made outside but within the domestic space... In these feminine spaces, she chooses her weapons. The open road, on the other hand, is not a site for colonial conquest" (2024, 75). Marlina asserts her mastery of the interior spaces when she poisons and decapitates the men. But through travel and the landscape, Surya allows Marlina power in the public spaces of the open road as well.

Marlina gains this power through the landscape by taking control of various forms of transportation—*biskayu*,[18] horse, and motorcycle—subverting the relationship between masculinity and the landscape. Each mode of travel becomes a vehicle (literally and symbolically) for asserting agency. In Chapter Two of the film, "The Journey," Marlina waits alone by a winding road until Novi joins her. When the *biskayu* finally arrives, the driver insists there is no room and tries to pull Marlina away from his vehicle. In response, she holds a machete to his throat, asserting her place by force. The severed head she carries terrifies the other passengers, who flee, grumbling about being late to market. This moment is not just about Marlina's physical movement across space, but a powerful reconfiguration of control—over the road, over the narrative, and over the gendered dynamics that usually determine who gets to move freely in a Western landscape.

The *biskayu* travels along the winding roads, looking so much like a train cutting across the landscape. Marlina sits next to the driver, holding the machete at his throat. An old woman jumps in front of the vehicle, forcing it to stop. The woman insists on coming aboard, even though the driver warns her to look at what is going on and to take the next *biskayu*. She has two horses and a young man with her, and says they cannot wait any longer, the horses are needed for the dowery for her nephew's wedding. Later, the *biskayu* stops for a break, but the two remaining thieves arrive looking for Marlina and she must hide. Novi provides a distraction, and they leave a horse for Marlina to continue the journey on horseback.

Like the desert, horses are essential for a Western film, but they are rarely given any attention. Tompkins argues that when the viewer looks at the screen and sees men and horses, the only thing they really see are men (1993, 86). Horses connect the rider to the ground, "More than any other single element in the genre, they symbolize the desire to recuperate some lost connection to life... The energy horses represent is destructive and creative" (Tompkins 1993, 87). Riding the horse codes Marlina as connected to the ground in a powerful and generative way. Later in the film, a motorbike replaces the horse as her primary vehicle, but the impact is the same.

18 *Biskayu* is a truck that provides makeshift public transportation across the difficult roads of Sumba. Wooden benches are often built in the back for people to sit, but they also transport horses (usually at the same time!).

Marlina goes to a small town to visit the police station. In Westerns, "Town is a mecca, a haven, journey's end," a kind of "surrogate home" (Tompkins 1993, 79). Marlina finds food, a bath, and even a glimpse into the motherhood that eluded her. But she does not find justice, there is nothing the police can do about her rape and robbery other than take a report. Marlina is left with no choice but to abandon that "home" as well.

The final shot of the movie is a mirror image of the first. This time, the motorbike is traveling away from the house along the long line of the horizon. The power now resides in Marlina, Novi, and the baby leaving: they are not running away but rather claiming the power of the landscape—"He can conquer [the landscape] by traversing it, know it by standing on it. Distance, made palpable through exposure and infinitely prolonged by the absence of obstacles, offers unlimited room to move. The man can go, in any direction, as far as he can go. The possibilities are infinite." (Tompkins 1993, 76). Tompkins connects the sparseness of the desert, the preferred location for the Western, to the city, the modern man-made environment, through its austerity. It conjures the city; but also suggests man can control nature. The landscape does not replace the comforts of home for women, but rather opens new possibilities. The dichotomy of inside/outside is not equal in the Western, rather the outside obliterates the inside. Marlina and Novi travel towards a completely new possibility, they are not replacing feminine domesticity with its opposite but rather trespassing away from previous gender roles.

Station Five: More Trains

Like *Marlina*, the film *Children of Srikandi* uses travel and movement as vehicles for liberation from the social structures that regulate gender and sexuality. In the opening segment, "Hello World" by Imelda Taurinamandala, a female voice narrates the story of a girl who once lived on this street—she played and dressed as a boy but was eventually forced to wear dresses and grow her hair long. Still, she held onto the dream of one day waking up as a boy. The camera never shows the girl herself; instead, it lingers on the closed gates and shuttered windows of houses seen from the street, emphasizing the divide between public and private space, and also how that spatial division shapes gender roles. The narrator reflects on her father's absence and her mother's care, recalling how her

mother told "beautiful and scary stories." As the narrative unfolds, the camera captures gendered everyday life: men pass by on motorbikes or push *bakso* carts,[19] while women care for children and prepare food. The segment concludes with an elderly woman telling a story about the value of sharing and working together, subtly reframing domesticity as a space of community and resilience. Ending with an image of various shoes lined up outside a house—some feminine, like heels, others likely belonging to men—the film brings home, gender, and movement into a single frame. In Indonesia, where shoes are typically removed before entering the home, this quiet image invites reflection on the roles people occupy both inside and outside, suggesting the possibility of crossing boundaries and reimagining gendered expectations by reimagining geography. Historian Wolfgang Schivelbusch, describes how the train changed people's linear relationship to the landscape, into geographical space:

> But geographical space is closed, and is therefore in its entire structure transparent. Every place in such a space is determined by its position with respect to the whole and ultimately by its relation to the null point of the coordinate system by which this space obtains its order (2014, 70).

Through the train as a motif and a way of thinking about the film, community and harmony are emphasized, and that all identities belong in the system. No one is left outside.

There are multiple modes of transportation in *Children of Srikandi*, but the train is central. Whether kicked out of home, moving between homes, or defining a space like a park bench as home, modes of travel enable the women to go from "I think I can" to realizing different possibilities. Likewise, "As a transportation technology, the railway was given a sacred mission... to remove barriers and isolation between regions and to promote progress and equality" (Sun 2023, 1434). On a train everyone is equal—all other labels fade away and one becomes a "passenger." It is a space for dreaming because, "the train reminds us that it is easy to stay and leave, and gives us a chance to temporarily escape from the present and imagine the future" (Sun 2023, 1435).

In the segment "Acceptance," a woman named Oji boards a train.

19 Bakso is a popular Indonesian street food consisting of meatballs, typically made from beef, served in a savory broth with noodles, tofu, and vegetables. It is often sold on a moving cart called a *kaki lima* (for the two legs and three wheels).

The mise-en-scène emphasizes the tracks stretching ahead, the shifting landscapes outside the window, and Oji herself as a solitary traveler. The camera alternates between shots of her resting in various positions and the scenery rushing by, underscoring the length and introspective nature of the journey. Two times exist at once, the world speeds by, but the shots are uncomfortably long. Schivelbusch describes how the advent of the railway collapsed traditional perceptions of time and space: "The diminution of transport distances seemed to create a new, reduced, geography, yet it did not actually alter the size of the spaces between the points connected by the new mode of transport... space was diminished and expanded" (2014, 52). This paradoxical transformation reflects Oji's experience—her movement through space becomes a metaphor for the possibility of an altered, more fluid sense of self, where the constraints of the past are reconfigured into a new geography of identity, both more familiar and more expansive.

Oji disembarks, and the camera pans behind her as she makes her way out of the station. The trip to the parking lot where she finally meets her friend is almost as long as the train trip — another collapsing of time and space. Finally, Oji hops on the back of her friend's motorbike, as they drive away a man exclaims, "they are going in the wrong direction." They are literally going against traffic, but this is rarely cause for concern in Indonesia (my friend Made would often drive us into traffic on her motorbike or go the opposite direction of the cars). Instead, I interpret the exclamation as one of protest; Oji is moving towards a space where she can claim her own identity. She is going "the wrong way" from society's conventions.

At her destination, Oji is seeking to find a new path in this city. She browses the classified ads in a newspaper and circles a job to apply for. At the office, she joins other candidates in taking a written test as part of the interview process. During the exam, a voice poses invasive personal questions—first about whether she has a boyfriend or girlfriend, then directly asking if she is a lesbian. Oji pauses, asks if her answer will affect the outcome, and then calmly states, *Saya lesbian* ("I am a lesbian"). She leaves the office and begins walking down the street, her figure gradually receding into the distance. It is in this act of walking—claiming public space with each step—that Oji asserts her agency and autonomy. The hard rock music that accompanies her journey, with Indonesian lyrics

declaring she will find her own way, amplifies her resistance. Movement becomes trespassing, the clearest expression of liberation.

Station Six: Navigating between Tradition and Modernity

I want to look at one more example of how *Children of Srikandi* condenses time and space, now in direct relation to relationships between modernity and tradition. At the beginning of "A Verse" by Winnie Wibowo, a still shot, shows cars racing down the streets in the city of Jakarta. Alongside the wide road is a tram station, where trains pull in and then race down the tracks. Time is compressed as day transitions into night and bright neon lights fill the sky. The soundtrack mixes the beat of techno music with the tinkling notes of a *gamelan*.[20] A voice describes the expectations that women must navigate in a society that demands they must be good wives and mothers. Finally, the voice demands "What if a woman doesn't desire a man? And desires a woman instead?"

As if to answer the questions, a full Javanese *gamelan* replaces the dance beats and the film transitions to "Deconstruction" by Stea Lim. Different versions of femininity flash on the screen. One woman wears a heavy fur coat and a red feather boa. Next, a Javanese dancer wears the costume of a refined, or *alus*, male character, which transitions to a Balinese dancer moving quickly with a fan; the dance is one that mixes male and female gender-traits. Finally, a demure-looking woman in a light blue Chinese cheongsam also holding a fan fills the screen. The woman with the boa is then shown roughly wiping her make up off with a cloth and the woman in the cheongsam is taking off her panty hose. Then one woman after the other removes their long hair revealing short hair underneath. A young girl in a dress playing with balls also removes a wig to show short hair. Finally, a woman in a *jilbab*[21] puts on a suitcoat and picks up a briefcase. These images of women navigating different aspects of tradition and modernity are part of a larger discourse

20 A gamelan is a traditional Indonesian ensemble of mostly percussive instruments—such as metallophones, gongs, and drums—played together in intricate, layered rhythms to create a rich, resonant sound.

21 It is common for women in Indonesia to refer to a hijab as a jilbab. Wearing a headscarf has become increasingly common in the last couple of decades or so.

where "images of women more than men have been used to signify the transition from tradition to modernity" (Brenner 1999, 16). These women trespass by enacting their desires within social spheres.

The music shifts back to techno, accompanied by a close-up of two women kissing. In this moment, the film moves from public or social desire to sexual desire. The camera avoids showing their full faces, focusing only on the area from their noses to their chins. Yet it captures their open-mouthed kiss and intertwined tongues. It is an uncomfortably long shot, which lasts over thirty seconds. There are no visible markers—no clothing, makeup, or accessories—to signal whether the women are traditional or modern, nor to suggest their gender expression. This extended depiction of physical intimacy is striking not only because it involves two women, but because such overt displays of affection are rare in Indonesian cinema. In many parts of Indonesia, particularly conservative regions, anything beyond handholding is often considered inappropriate.

Like many countries, Indonesia has developed specific conventions for depicting sexual intimacy on screen. As Karl G. Heider notes in his history of Indonesian cinema, sexuality is often "either downplayed or presented as sadism." Scenes of rape, particularly in war or horror films, may be shown explicitly, while depictions of consensual intimacy, especially acts of love and tenderness, typically occur offscreen. Even something as simple as a kiss often cuts away before the lips meet (1991, 66–67). Ben Murtagh, in his study of LGBTQ films in Indonesia, observes that although the 1990s saw some improvement in representing gay subject positions, dominant cinematic portrayals continued to center on "the sexually licentious woman" as a threat to the moral (heterosexual) order (2013, 42). Even as more films depict gay characters, physical intimacy is still rare. Indonesia's first gay kiss (between two men) in a movie happened in 2003 with the release of Na Dinata's *Arisan!* The controversial film won the Citra Award for best screenplay. Even in the popular film *Berbagi Suami* (*Love for Share*), which features a relatively positive lesbian subplot, most forms of intimacy (heterosexual or homosexual) remain offscreen. By graphically depicting the kiss, *Children of Srikandi* makes desire central. Removed from any context, from time and place, the kiss boldly trespasses across conventions in film and society.

Final Station: All Aboard for the World

Film allows the viewer, like the train enables the passenger, a certain kind of access to even remote places. Trains emphasize the interconnection of the world (Schivelbusch 2014, 52). The final segment in *Children of Srikandi*, called "No Label" by Afank Mariani, challenges efforts to categorize and limit gender and sexual identities. A young masculine-presenting woman is in a large shopping mall talking into a microphone. The mall is a place that engages with a public global modernity. It is also a space coded as feminine—most of the shoppers are women and children (Goodlander 2015). As she moves around the mall, riding the escalator, she talks about her own preference to resist a label.

The film cuts to the filmmakers standing outside holding labels of identity written on pieces of paper they hold in front of themselves. "Butch," "andro-femme," "pansexual," and "queer" each depicts a reliance on an international (English) vocabulary to describe identities that do not fit easily within Indonesian society. Others hold signs that resist conventional labels, and say things like, "girl boy whatever" or "plant sexual." One woman has a sign that says, "no label." But she cannot speak, she needs others to speak for her. Finally, they throw the signs in the air, and they blow away in the wind. The labels literally cannot stick.

Hegemonic Indonesian film limits women to peripheral roles, but both *Children of Srikandi* and *Marlina* demonstrate how women filmmakers engage within transnational circuits to find means of trespassing. At the end of *Children of Srikandi*, the viewer is again made aware of the media *as* media. Back at the mall, the speaker is interrupted by a security guard (who remains off camera). He tells her that she cannot film in the mall without a permit. This scene calls into question who will be able to claim a voice and who controls the expression of ideas and stories. The filmmaker in the mall is silenced by the guard; likewise, *Children of Srikandi* does not circulate in Indonesia.[22] By exposing the vulnerability of the filmmaking apparatus, the film challenges its international audiences to bear witness to Indonesian women's trespassing.

22 Because of fear of negative consequences, the film requires consent from everyone to be shown in Indonesia. Also, the LGBTQ film festival, Q! Festival ended in 2017 amid growing protests from conservative Muslims. When it existed, Q! Festival was the largest film festival in Indonesia, and even greater in size than several distinguished international film festivals.

BY BOAT

4. Set to Sail

> Travelers, poets and liars are three words all of one signification (Brathwaite 1630).

I have always loved to boat, swim, or be by the water. Whether at the beach walking in the sand along that place where the water washes over my feet and back, or on a boat traveling from one island to the next, I am at my happiest. I grew up on a small lake in Michigan, where I learned to water ski, pulled by my father's small motorboat. We also jumped off the red paddle boat to go swimming away from shore. In NYC after college, a ferry boat carried me from Manhattan to Staten Island so I could get a glimpse of the Statue of Liberty. In grad school, my wife and I got sunburned sitting on a big tourist boat to watch the whales in Hawai'i. I took a boat from Manado to Bunaken to learn to scuba dive during my first trip to Indonesia. Later, my dad purchased a larger boat, and the water of lake Michigan rocked us to sleep when we spent the night there. While doing research for my dissertation, I once took the large public ferry from Bali to Lombok to attend a *topeng* performance happening at a wedding. My personal experiences like these enforce how in literature and film, the image of a boat embarking on a journey at sea invokes a feeling of romance and adventure, especially for voyages of discovery to new places, which ultimately become voyages of self-discovery.

Boats often embody both dreams and harsh realities. Jaques Schnier describes how paintings of boats from different cultures and periods depict boats as funeral vessels, carrying the dead across the boundary and into the afterlife (1951, 55–56). Noah's ark demonstrates how a ship might indicate disaster and destruction but also offer hope for creating a new world (Schnier 1951, 62). In this chapter, I focus on boats (together with images of oceans and islands) to understand the dichotomous tensions often inherent in trespassing, or traveling, between two places or possibilities.

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To explore how trespassing appears within different binaries, I focus on three different works. The novel, *Perahu Kertas* (*Paper Boats*) by Dee Lestari follows the story of Kugy, who dreams of someday being an author of fairytales. Kugy writes her dreams on boats made of paper and sets them to sea, eventually realizing the power of being true-to-herself. Themes of boats, travel, borders, and dreams are shared in the short play *Dapur* (*The Kitchen*) by Luna Vidya and the song "Gunung Salahutu/'O Honolulu Ku'u Home" by Vanessa Alputila. In the song and the play, the island of Ambon, part of the Maluku islands in Indonesia, is the imagined home. Characters struggle to picture their new destination as "home" and boats represent voyages of trespassing against unrealized hopes.

Boats join the imaginary to the physical. In literature, the binary between disaster and freedom inherent in voyages by sea, shipwrecks, and adventure connect boats to islands. Additionally, in Indonesia, a nation of islands, boats provide essential links between places. There, "sea travel is the most commonly used and cheapest means of travel" (Williams 2007, 5). Boats also provide access to fishing, an essential part of the Indonesian diet. Some ethnic groups, like the Bugis, are renowned for their expert sailing and navigation skills. In the Riau Islands, the *orang laut* (literally, people of the sea) live their lives on boats, rather than structures built on land. Through trade and then colonialism sea travel brought not just people and goods, but many enduring aspects of religion and culture. Boats emphasize the insular nature of the Indonesian nation and the divide between land and sea.

Identity emerges as a key concept within the linguistic past of the island as a geographic formation and label. In his exploration of the definition and history of the island, Stephen A. Royle describes that within the English etymology of the term island, the first syllable "ey" is that which refers to insularity. The "ey" then connected with "land" to express the tension between land and water that is inherent to any idea of an island (2014, 7).. He continues, "to the Vikings a piece of land surrounded by water was not an *ey* unless it was sufficiently distant from the mainland for the passage separating it to be navigable by a ship with its rudder in place" (2014, 8). Islands suggest the distinct "I" that the characters struggle to find through writing, but boats remind the reader how far they must travel, or trespass, to find their dreams.

For women writers who struggle to find freedom and acceptance, another "ey" emerges. In the introduction to *Women Writing Culture*, Ruth Behar thinks about how others, the outside eyes, "bore in on her," judging if she can write as good as men:

> The eyes on a woman's back are also her own eyes. They are everything she has seen on her travels and in her return home. They represent the different roles a women assumes in the various places where she sojourns, each eye seeing her at a slightly different angle. Sitting down to write, a women sheds the clothes of each of the different roles she has played and lets all the eyes of her experiences come forth as she completes her life and begins to put pencil to paper (1995, 2).

In this chapter, the dichotomous nature of boats point to the complex relationship between global travel and writing, especially for women for whom travel and adventure was considered "unbecoming for a lady." Even so, in the early twentieth century, women adventurers traveled to Asia and other far-off lands, just like men. These women wrote down their stories as traces of their journeys that brought together the experiences and roles they have had to play.

Travel is forward-looking—future bound, but through my focus on different kinds of written and performed texts, I explore how women might use travel to revise gender limitations. For women, boats and islands offer a vehicle for looking back. I am inspired by feminist theory, especially performance theory, which describes how vision, or the "gaze," enacts male power. Joseph A. Boone and Michael Cadden suggest engaging the "I/eye" of one's own writing and subject-position as re-vision, as defined by Adrienne Rich:

> Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for us more than chapter in cultural history; it is an act of survival [...] We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on tradition but to break its hold over us (Rich as qtd. in Boone and Cadden 1990, 3).

The women characters and artists in this chapter travel to discover what self will persist. They write performances, songs, and fairytales to intervene into a world that resists their agency and tries to determine how and what they will write.

Writing Stories; Writing Fairytales

> Maybe it's all that we need is to meet in the middle of impossibilities
> Standing at opposite poles, equal partners in a mystery ("Mystery," Indigo Girls).

In her Blog "55 Days,"[1] Dee Lestari, the author of *Paper Boats*, explains that the idea for *Paper Boats* came from the American folk duo the Indigo Girls.[2] *Paper Boats* has a complex plot that follows the lives of four friends from college to adulthood. Lestari saw the main characters of Kugy and Keenan as those "equal partners" at opposite poles. Keenan desires to become a painter, like his mother was before she married. But Keenan must bow to the wishes of his father and study business. At university, through his cousin Eko, Keenan meets Kugy, a self-declared weirdo in dress and tastes, who dreams of becoming a writer. Kugy is best friends with Eko's girlfriend, Noni. Throughout, Kugy and Keenan are drawn to each other, but circumstances keep the two apart. Both Kugy and Keenan fall in love and break up with others; they also leave school and experience working in the "real world." There is deception too, descriptions of beaches in Bali as a dreamy place to follow your heart, and a side story about helping disadvantaged students in rural Java (who seem to meet with success only to lose their land to corrupt business-developers and one student dies of typhus). Mistaken identities and chance meetings rival that of a French farce until all the truths come out at the end.

Dewi (Dee) Lestari is often celebrated as one of Indonesia's most influential artists. Before becoming known as an author, Lestari was famous as a singer and songwriter, primarily as part of the group "Rida, Sita, Dewi" and as a solo artist. For context, the blog Tony's Reading List (2015) describes Lestari as a writer in the following manner: "it's akin to Beyoncé taking up literary fiction." Lestari's first book, *Kesatria, Putri, dan Bintang Jatuh* (*The Knight, the Princess, and the Falling Star*) was released in 2001 and sold out its first printing in two weeks and has received international acclaim. The novel weaves together a

1 You can read the blog at https://dee-55days.blogspot.com

2 The Indigo Girls are a folk-rock duo composed of Amy Ray and Emily Saliers. They are known for their intricate vocal harmonies, socially conscious lyrics, and enduring influence on the indie-folk scene since the late 1980s. I might add, they are also one of my favorite groups.

complex, philosophical narrative of romance and science, exploring the interconnectedness of human lives through the story of two students in Georgetown and a parallel tale of a forbidden love in Jakarta. It is bold in both style and content. That book was the first of the Supernova series, a cult favorite among Indonesian youth (there are six total in the series).

For her music, films, and books, Lestari has been recognized by numerous awards in Indonesia and abroad, including being the only writer to win book of the year twice from the Indonesian Publishers Association/Ikatan Penerbit Indonesia (IKAPI). Indonesian literary critic and founder of the magazine *Tempo* wrote in the forward to another one of Lestari's books that her work was "Uncomplicated, in fact quite brilliant" and that "there is an English word, wit, that can perhaps be translated as *cerdas* (vivacity, verve). This collection of prose will revive the *cerdas* of Indonesian literature" (Junaidi 2006). In total, Lestari has published eighteen books, and five of those, including *Paper Boats*, have become popular films.

Lestari's reputation in Indonesia is enhanced by her reputation abroad. She has represented Indonesian literature at prestigious book fairs in Frankfurt, Germany, Doha, Singapore, the Ubud Readers and Writers Festival in Bali, and others. Even though currently only two of her books have been translated into English, she writes with an international audience in mind. In 2019, she explained to a reporter from the British Council at the London Book Fair that she uses Dee Lestari as her pen name because "Dewi can be difficult for foreigners to pronounce sometimes." She recognizes the process of translation is difficult and long, and "not all titles will work for the international or global market."

The reception of Lestari's work mirrors the divide between work that is treated as "popular" and work that is appraised as "literature." Unlike her other work, *Paper Boats* received numerous negative reviews, many of them gendered. For example, writing for Asia Media International, Gaby Rusli complains, "Although starting out as an exemplary quest featuring two young adults trying to realize their dreams against all odds, *Paper Boats* becomes a derivative love story. One cannot help but worry about the message Lestari conveys to the young, malleable minds who read her work" (2022). In her blog about books, BookNAround, Kristen complains that "the novel feels like a YA chick lit kind of book and the

decisions made by some of the characters are wildly frustrating."[3] An Indonesian reviewer writing for the site Bookoopedia felt that the story and characters would be more appropriate for a Korean soap opera than for literature.[4] These comments compel a consideration of what kind of novel is *Paper Boats*—Lestari herself explains, "I'm the type of writer who's in the intersection between literary high-brow culture and pop culture. My work is always a mix of those two worlds, so some people say it's not easy to categorise, so I just say I write fiction, basically."[5]

The divide between "literature" and "popular literature" is central to understanding perceptions about early women writers. In her analysis of women's literature in the 1970s and 1980s, Diah Ariani Arimbi describes how the division of *sastra berbobat*, "serious literature," versus *sastra pop*, "popular literature," developed and impacted women writers. Most of the work by women authors was considered *sastra pop* because it was said to not deal with serious, or national, topics. The themes of those novels were romantic, rather than political, because "the portrayal of women never goes beyond a girl in search of an everlasting love; she may be urban and educated, yet she is content to be male dominated" (2015, 77). *Sastra pop* often reinforced women's roles as wives and mothers and became part of larger discourses in the region that marginalized and subordinated the female body through social strategies and even legislation.

When women authors rose into prominence, critical reception persisted to keep their work relegated to the margins. On the surface, *Paper Boats* is the kind of light romance women authors are often accused of writing, instead of "serious literature," but in an interview with the *Jakarta Post*, Lestari describes that "*Perahu Kertas* is a reflection of life's great lessons, such as finding that subtle balance between when to let go and when to pursue. It's not just about romance" (Setiawati 2012). I believe within the novel, Lestari gives the reader guidance on how to think about the book specifically and receptions of women's literature more generally. In the first few pages, Lestari declares that the main

3 There is no last name given for Kristen. The blog is here: https://booknaround.blogspot.com/2018/10/review-paper-boats-by-dee-lestari.html

4 S*ebenarnya yang terlintas di benak saya adalah cerita ini akan lebih cocok jika diwujudkan dalan bentuk seperti drama seri Korea*. See https://web.archive.org/web/20130122212707/http://www.bookoopedia.com/id/book/id-31-28854/sastra-puisi/perahu-kertas.html

5 See https://www.britishcouncil.id/en/12-writers-focus-dewi-dee-lestari

character Kugy, "knew where she was headed—even if the road she would have to take was a winding one" (*Paper Boats*, henceforth PB, 9).[6] The Indonesian version of this sentence is different. It emphasizes the act of writing, *menulis*, as the essential action for self-discovery, represented by the metaphor of travel (*jalan*). Noteably, Kugy not only writes stories, but she writes fairytales (*dongeng*). Fairytales are a particular kind of story, and I believe Lestari is not only providing insight into the character of Kugy (who aspires to be an author of fairytales), but also in how to read and understand *Paper Boats,* as well as Lestari's other work.

Fairytales are defined by their structure and various "fairytale elements," many of which are present in *Paper Boats.* "Fairy tales, which speak in a language well understood in the modern world, remain relevant because they allude to deep hopes for material improvement, because they present illusions of happiness to come, and because they provide social paradigms that overlap nearly perfectly with daydreams of a better life" (Bottigheimer 2009, 13). In her book about the history of fairytales, scholar Ruth B. Bottigheimer identifies two primary categories of fairytales. The first kind are "restoration fairytales" where a character has a loss of status, for example a princess is cast out from her castle. After various tests and hardships, the story ends with a restoration of that high status. The other type, "rise fairytales," better matches the various elements of *Paper Boats* that make it a fairytale and not a romance. In a rise fairytale the main character transforms from low status to high status, often through a quest, overcoming an enemy, and using magical items.

By positioning her work as a fairytale, Lestari challenges debates about the value of women's literary work, and what even counts as "literature" in Indonesia. Meg Downes, writing for *Inside Indonesia* describes that a decade into the twenty-first century, most Indonesians don't even remember the derogatory label *sastra wangi* or "perfumed literature" used to describe works by women such as Lestari. She points to the lack of controversy surrounding film adaptations as evidence that "the classic image of literature as an elite, secular, male-dominated scene has lost much of its power. It has been replaced by more varied ideas about authorship" (2015). Even so, not all have embraced this inclusive diversity within Indonesian literature. Also writing for *Inside Indonesia*,

6 *Ia akan menulis dongengnya sendiri, kendati jalan yang ditempuhnya harus berputar-putar* (*Perahu Kertas*, henceforth PK 10).

Hendrik M. J. Maier complains that the literary scene in Indonesia has become like a "many-headed machine" as he mourns that a "serious national literature... has been placed on the back burner" (2015). *Paper Boats* offers an opportunity to rethink this dichotomy between *kesusasteraan Indonesia* and *sastra pop/sastra wangi*.

Internationally, contemporary debates about both romance novels and fairytales often focus on whether they are inherently oppressive to women or whether they might be vehicles for women's empowerment.[7] Also, women are often perceived (or are) the primary authors and consumers of romance novels and fairytales.[8] Fairytales, like romance novels, contain "romantic paradigms that profoundly influenc[e] women's fantasies and the subconscious scenarios for their real lives" (Rowe 1983, 69). But the women in *Paper Boats* are not helpless princesses waiting for a man to rescue them, even though love is a major part of the story. Instead, *Paper Boats* traces Kugy's journey to find her own voice and power through her stories.

In framing Kugy's authorial dreams, and really the novel, as fairytale, Lestari is joining "a long tradition of tales written by women" (Harries 2001, 5). And stories by women have power. Through Kugy, Lestari rehearses the debate about what is literature. Even though it is Kugy's dream to write fairytales, she also proclaims:

> Kennan, I'm eighteen. I'm majoring in literature. I want to become a serious writer and to be taken seriously as a writer. I'm surrounded by people who want to win writing contests in magazines for "grown ups" or who want to win the Jakarta Arts Council Novel Competition. That's how you prove you're a real writer (PB 36).[9]

Kugy believes it is only after she is recognized as a serious writer that she will be able to write the stories from her dreams. In a way, Kugy might be voicing Lestari's thoughts towards her own work. Even though there is a

7 See "The Mirror Broken" by Elizabeth Wanning Harries (2000) for an excellent overview of the debates around Fairytales. For a similar look at feminism and romance novels, see Simon 2017.

8 Much of the mythic history of fairytales asserts that these stories came from oral traditions told by women from generation-to-generation. For an overview of this, and an excellent refutation see: Bottigheimer 2009.

9 *Keenan, umurku 18 tahun, kuliah jurusan Sastra, kepingin jadi penulis serius dan dihargai sebagai penulis serius. Orang-orang di lingkunganku kepingin jadi juara menulis cerpen di majalah dewasa, atau juara lomba novel Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, dan itu menjadi pembuktian yang dianggap sah* (PK 36–37).

fairytale element in the first novel of the Supernova series, unlike *Paper Boats*, it is praised as intellectual, complex, and deals with technology, science, and universal themes. Perhaps one paved the way for the other.

To make money while she is in school, Kugy mastered the structure and style of the short stories often published in magazines. The prize money allows her to buy things like a new cell phone. Keenan becomes the critic who articulates the value of fairytales versus these award-winning stories. He declares:

> "To someone who doesn't know you, the story is good," continued Keenan. "But I think your fairytales are more authentic. More original. And the reflect who you really are. I couldn't find anything of you in the short story—just a writer clever with words, but lacking in soul" (PB 53).[10]

Later Kugy reflects on these words and recognizes that it is only when writing her fairytales that "it felt as if she was running free, wherever her heart desired" (PB 54).[11] Through Kugy, Lestari asserts the importance of trespassing against the normalization of what might be considered "good," in order to find freedom to run. *Paper Boats* is a revision, because like other contemporary authors writing or rewriting fairytales, Lestari aims to "reverse traditional situations and imagine ways the stories could have been otherwise" (Harries 2001, 163).

Paper Boats and Oceanic Feelings

Day by day I float my paper boats one by one down
the running stream.
In big black letters I write my name on them and the
name of
the village where I live.
I hope that someone in some strange land will find
them and
know who I am.[12]

10 *Buat orang yang nggak tahu kamu, cerpen itu mungkin bagus. Tapi saya merasa dongeng-dongeng kamu jauh lebih otentik, lebih orisinal, dan lebih mencerminkan kamu yang sebenarnya. Dalam cerpen itu, saya tidak menemukan diri kamu. Yang saya temukan adalah penulis yang pintar merangkai kata-kata, tapi nggak ada nyawa," sambung Keenan lagi* (PK 54).

11 *Dalam dongengnya, ia seolah berlari bebas, sesuka hati* (PK 55).

12 Tagore, "Paper Boats," 1913. The entire poem can be found at https://www.

In the novel, boats transport dreams rather than people. Kugy began sending letters to Neptune, the god of the sea, through paper boats when she was young and her family lived near the coast. Her brother Karel once told her she was an Aquarius—the water bearer—and Kugy imagined herself as a spy for Neptune, sending him regular reports. Neptune, the Roman god of the sea, is often associated with creativity, pursuing one's dreams, and personal freedom in astrology. When her family moved away from the beach, her brother reassured her, "all rivers flow to the sea" (PB 13).[13] As she grew older, Kugy continued to send these reports to Neptune via paper boats. Even though she knew that it wasn't even likely her boats made it to sea, "the sight of those paper boats, carried out on the water, set her soul at ease" (PB 13).[14] Throughout the novel, boats and other seafaring imagery allow Kugy to work through and articulate her wants and desires.

Lestari initially thought the title of the book would be "Keenan and Kugy." She saw them as partners, and the action of the story was their coming together. Keenan learned about the paper boats one of the first times the four friends hung out together. They were playing a game similar to "truth or dare" where each person needs to reveal something embarrassing about themselves. Kugy couldn't think of anything (she was already so odd), so her friend Noni shared that Kugy sends letters out to sea to the god Neptune. Kugy further explained that she was an agent to Neptune because she was an Aquarius. Keenan exclaims he is also an Aquarius, and that they both must be spies for Neptune. Throughout the novel, their friendship and love deepen, influenced by Neptune and the symbolism of the paper boats.

Even though Keenan and Kugy seem made for each other, their relationship is not smooth sailing. At first, Kugy has a boyfriend, her childhood sweetheart, Josh. But soon after that relationship dissolves, Keenan has been set up with a friend of Noni's named Wanda. As that relationship develops, Kugy separates herself from Keenan and her old friends. Later, Keenan has captured the heart of a young girl named Luhde, who he meets when he moves to Bali to pursue painting. After

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poetrybyheart.org.uk/poems/paper-boats

13 *Semua aliran air akan menuju ke laut* (PK 13).

14 *Ia tidak bisa menjelaskan bagaimana batinnya dibuat damai dengan menyaksikan perahu-perahu kertas itu hanyut terbawa air* (PK 14).

graduation, Kugy gets an internship, and then a job at an advertising agency and a relationship develops between her and her boss Remi. The imagery of anchors and boats, starting and stopping, emphasizes the emotional tenor of these different encounters.

When Remi takes Kugy out the first time on a date at a seafood restaurant, the story of Neptune and the paper boats appears again. After their meal, Remi asks if he has eaten enough fish to be an agent of Neptune; he is not an Aquarius so he must meet stringent requirements. Kugy acknowledges he has met the first requirement, but, "second, you must know how to make a paper boat" (PB 245).[15] Remi quickly makes one out of the paper placemat. After driving her home, Remi gives the paper boat to Kugy, to send a message to Neptune. Once inside, Kugy reads the message where Remi thanked her for a wonderful night. He added that even if he cannot be an agent of Neptune, he wants to ask her out again.

Although Kugy loves Remi, her feelings for Keenan continue to trouble her. These emotions churn within her and are once again emphasized through references to paper boats. Kugy releases her tumultuous feelings into the ocean, embodying the concept of the oceanic—a sensation Caroline Rooney, borrowing from Freud, describes as "an experience of the real, a reality of being, free of any illusion" (2007, p. 21). The oceanic signifies a sense of interconnectedness with the world, a feeling of oneness. The first time Remi confesses his love to Kugy, they are on a beach:

> The waves swept across the sand behind them, enveloping them in their sweet, never-ending cadence. But the same sound reminded Kugy of something else. In her heart, she bid farewell to the person whose name she had clung fast to for so long. She released the name into the wind and the waves and cast it adrift on the sea (PB 279).[16]

By casting these feelings out into the ocean, they are not thrown away but become oceanic. Kugy's feelings expand, free from illusion, until the waves bring them back at the end of the novel.

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15 *Kedua, harus bisa bikin perahu kertas* (PK 269).

16 *Suara ombak yang menyapu dari belakang menyelimuti mereka berdua dalam alunan merdu yang tak berkesudahan. Namun, suara yang sama seolah mengingatkan Kugy akan sesuatu. Dalam hati, ia mengucapkan selamat tinggal pada satu nama yang begitu lama melekat di hatinya. Melepaskannya pada angin dan ombak. Menghanyutkannya di air laut. Merelakannya lepas bersama malam terakhir di ujung tahun* (PK 309).

Magical Objects

A common feature of fairytales are the uses of magical objects to help the protagonist on her quest. Magic objects are "a sign to the reader that they are entering a realm where the rules of everyday life do not apply; the only limit on what might happen is the ability to imagine it" (Reddan 2016, 191). The central magical objects in the novel are the handmade books filled with Kugy's tales. Early in their friendship, Kugy lends Keenan a book of her stories, *A Collection of Fairy Tales from the Chest of Wonders* (*Kumpulan Dongeng Dari Peti Ajaib*). She explains:

> My brother Karel once gave me an old-fashioned chest, the kind of treasure chest you see in comic books. He said it had been retrieved from a shipwreck and that it once contained scrolls—historical manuscripts—that had been damaged after being underwater for so long. I was so happy to have that chest. And I was determined to fill it with my own manuscripts, so that the chest would be full again (PB 38).[17]

Treasure chests are a common trope in fairytales, sometimes containing the secret item required for a quest or a reward of riches. The magic of the stories from the chest work, for the first time since returning from the Netherlands, Keenan can paint again.

Folklorist Bronwyn Reddan argues that it is through the use of magical objects that female characters challenge gender norms, especially those related to the right to choose love and marriage (2016). Throughout the novel, the movement of Kugy's handmade book of fairytales, a kind of magical object, determines Kugy's fate. For example, Keenan depends on the book of stories for the divine inspiration of his paintings. Additionally, Remi breaks off his engagement after reading the letter tucked within her book. Finally, Noni learns about Kugy's true feelings about Keenan through the same book, and this restores their friendship. Kugy created the book, and therefore also created her own fate; such magical objects "possess a life of their own and the power to influence the life of their human user" (Reddan 2016, 194). Lestari affirms the magical and material power of stories through Kugy's fairytale book.

17 *Aku punya peti kuno, dikasih sama Karel, abangku. Bentuknya kayak peti harta karun yang ada di komik-komik. Karel bilang, peti itu diambil dari perahu karam, dan isinya gulungan-gulungan naskah sejarah yang jadi hancur karena terendam air laut. Aku senang sekali dapat peti itu, dan aku bertekad untuk mengisinya ulang dengan naskah-naskah dongeng buatanku, supaya peti itu kembali berisikan sesuatu* (PK 38).

From Ocean to Island

Many of the best-known stories about islands, from *Robin Crusoe* to *The Tempest* are interpreted as stories of colonial conquest. The (male) hero lays claim to the "deserted" island and there he fashions his own kingdom. The border between the ocean and sand places islands as mythical spaces located "somewhere... between the real and unreal" (Zilmer 2012, 34). And as Sonja Boon, Butler, and Jefferies write, "Islands are good to think with... to think from an island, is to think from a threshold space, a borderland between land and sea. Indeed, the shoreline can be understood as a liminal space of potential and possibility" (Boon et al. 2018, 5).

The song "Gunung Salahutu/ʻO Honolulu Kuʻu Home" ("Gunung Salahutu")[18] by Vanessa Alputila and its accompanying video demonstrate how the shoreline can be navigated as a place to bridge past and future; offering a perspective on islands as border spaces that are powerful for articulating identity. The video shows a singer, Alputila, on a beach juxtaposed with black and white photos of her past. The video and lyrics in both Indonesian and Hawaiʻian languages invoke rich imagery of sea and mountain. At the end of the song, Alputila declares that "this is the end of my story," but considered with the first part of the song and the imagery of the video, story/place remain transitory and unsettled. The shoreline as a border space reflects the experience of Kugy in *Paper Boats* and "Gunung Salahutu" offers insight into how the beach enables trespassing between past and present.

The video of "Gunung Salahutu" opens with a peaceful sense of longing and nostalgia that blends the sounds and sites of the islands of Indonesia and Hawaiʻi. Alputila is caught in the kind of double-movement that Gilles Deleuze attributes to islands:

> Dreaming of islands—whether with joy or in fear, it doesn't matter—is dreaming pulling away, of being already separate, far from any continent, of being lost and alone—or it is dreaming of starting from scratch, recreating, beginning anew? (2004, 10).

The opening shot is in black and white, Alputila walks along a deserted beach—the meeting of sand and water suggests the quintessential

18 "Gungung" means mountain, and Salahutu is the name of a mountain near the city of Ambon. The mountain is known for its diversity of flora and fauna.

primitive island. There are no other people or buildings in the shot, and visuals and music reinforce ambiguity regarding time and place. Is Alputila in Indonesia or Hawai'i? Is it the past or present? The flute and guitar scales in the song's intro also indicate a kind of islandness without being either identifiably Hawai'ian or Indonesian, but like the beach, the music might be either. Alputila is wearing an above-the-knee, cotton, floral print dress that also indicates a kind of tropical placelessness. The footsteps in the sand trail behind her, visual proof of travel, emphasizing traces of what was. Alputila looks out to the water; as if longing for a place that is not this place. She is "lost and alone," but also "recreating, beginning anew." Travel offers a means to escape the placeless feminine islands.

The song describes Alputila's migration from Ambon to Hawai'i. Ambon is part of Indonesia, located in the Maluku islands, well-known for its music culture. Every person in Ambon is said to have music in their "blood and pulse"; Ambon was declared an UNESCO City of Music in 2019.[19] The Maluku islands are located towards the eastern edge of the Indonesian archipelago, between Sulawesi and Papua New Guinea. Along the division between Asia and Oceania, they are also a location of in between. The Malukus are where Europeans first encountered Southeast Asia; the Portuguese conquered the city state of Malacca in 1511 to establish a spice trade. Religiously the islands are also split between Islam and Christianity; Ambon has one of the largest percentages of Christians in Indonesia.

Alputila is the only female member of the group Haopinaka, which strives to bring "the spirit of Aloha" to San Francisco through Hawai'ian-inspired music and dance. According to the group's website, the name Haopinaka represents the band's three male members—because it is a "combination of the words HAO-le (white guy), PI-noy (Filipino guy), and ka-NAKA (Hawai'ian guy). And it is this unique friendship of cultures and styles that creates the sweet and lively sound of HAOPINAKA."[20] Alputila is married to the Haole member of the group,

19 Being a UNESCO City of Music means that a city is recognized for its rich musical heritage, vibrant music scene, and commitment to fostering creativity and cultural exchange through music. This designation highlights the city's efforts to promote music as a central part of its social, cultural, and economic life, while also engaging in sustainable development through music-related initiatives.

20 See https://www.haopinaka.com/about

Peter Garellick, and they split their time between California and Hawai'i. Alputila sings and dances hula with the group, but she also has released two solo albums. The song "Gunung Salahuto" is from the first album called "Aloha Ambon." In Hawai'ian, "Aloha" means both goodbye and hello, adding to the doubleness of time and place within the song.

Alputila opens the song with the lyrics, "Ambon, motherland of the Moluccas, you and I were together by the seashore," as she walks out of the frame. The shot dissolved to a close up on Alputila, she is looking off on a diagonal to the right of the screen. What or who she is singing to is not visible, and the background is now filled with leaves, not water. The lyrics (translated as subtitles on the video) continue:

Kota Ambon Ibu Negeri tanah Maluku
di laut tempat kita bersatu
dari jauh terlihatku Salahutu
bedah ingat dahulu bedah di situ
bulan terpantai
dengan suara gitar beramai-ramai
Siu Ambon yang indah
apo tempo akan kau lagi.

You and I were together by the seashore
From afar, I can still see Mt. Salahutu
And I remember when I was there,
The moonlight was shining on the shore,
with the lively sound of guitars and drums
Oh Ambon, with your beautiful bay,
when will I see you again?[21]

During this part of the song, the mood remains dark, full of a kind of sadness. The beauty of the moon and the liveliness of the music that she describes is not supported by the music or the visuals. Most of the first half of the song enacts Deleuze's "dreaming pulling away, of being

21 In an email exchange with Alputila where I asked for permission to include the lyrics of the song in this book, she explained that the Indonesian song is an Indonesian folk song that is common in the area. The song about Hawai'i is her own creation. You can view the song and its video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsqvFyCBtiU

already separate, far from any continent, of being lost and alone." The visuals during the line "the moonlight was shining on the shore" are strikingly different because Alputila is now in full color, looking directly into the camera. This emphasizes a contrast between the present as now, shared with the viewer of the video, and the distant past.

The song celebrates Alputila's present or future in Hawai'i, but there is also a sense of longing for the past. The middle section of the song reinforces a sense of nostalgia, or a "kind of intense homesickness or a wistful desire for an imagined past" (Deseyn et al. 2014, 22). This section passes the melody from steel guitar, to flute, to fiddle. Sepia-toned photos display on the screen showing images of people. For example, one is of an old woman sitting on a front porch and another shows two female friends laughing as they look right to something beyond the frame. The viewer is given the impression that these are people from Alputila's past in Ambon, although there is nothing in the images clarifying who or where they are. The style of most of the images, unposed moments in everyday life, are more reminiscent of ethnographic photographs than family memories.

The presentation of the photographs reinforces a doubleness between past and present. Writing about migrants from a village in Morocco, ethnographer Bart Deseyn notes that even when the migrants left abject poverty and a difficult life, they still felt a "powerful, alluring, a deep force" drawing them to the past. Photographs function as key referents for migrants negotiating their past and present. "It is the presence of something manifestly absent that makes the past like photographs, and that makes photographs call up such pasts" (Deseyn et al. 2014, 23). In the music video, there is nothing in the photographs to indicate when they were taken. The clothes and scenery could be from fifty years ago, or from today. The urban viewer sees the images of people in a rural village as a marker of past, or tradition, yet for the people in the photos, they also represent the present.

Thinking about his own experience between his island origins and life in the city of Manchester, even though he vowed not to, Sonja Boon was struck by how enticing the colorful photos of his island home seemed in contrast to the grey sky of his faraway city (2018, 118). Nostalgia often means idealization; the past is reimagined in the present in a particularly favorable way. Alputila inverts this relationship. The

world of the present, the song, is in color while the photos of the past are black and white. In doing so, she reverses the tendency of nostalgia to romanticize the past. Alputila thus draws attention to the tensions between past and present, which I read as illustrating how, for women, travel offers a borderless space where arriving is just as unlikely as the going.

The mood of the final third of the song completely changes. Alputila is shown wearing a bright blue muumuu[22] with puffy sleeves and a flower lei around her neck. She is dancing hula in front of the deep blue ocean and sky, Diamond Head is off in the distance firmly establishing the location of Waikiki Beach in Honolulu, Hawai'i. A blue flower is in her hair, and her expression is joyous. The lyrics are:

'O Honolulu ku'u home i ka Pākīpika,
ke honi nei ka makani 'olu ia'u.
Aia i Helumoa 'ike aku
nā kumu wai nani a me ka pua.
Malama ka mahina i ka Ala Wai,
'o ka leo 'ukulele me ka kīkā kila.
Ha'ina 'ia mai ana ka puana
'o Honolulu ku'u home ke aloha.
Ha'ina 'ia mai ana ka puana
'o Honolulu ku'u home ke aloha.

Honolulu, my home in the Pacific,
kissed by the gentle trade winds.
Here at Helumoa you will find
the sources of beautiful water and flowers.
The moonlight shining on the Ala Wai,
the sound of the ukulele and the steel guitar.
This is the end of my story,
of Honolulu, my beloved home.
This is the end of my story,
of Honolulu, my beloved home.[23]

22 A muumuu is a loose-fitting dress often with bright colors and flower motifs. Originally introduced by Protestant missionaries to encourage modesty, the dress has been adapted as Aloha wear and is associated with Hawai'i.

23 Special thanks to Iāsona Kaper for providing the transcription of the Hawai'ian

In hula, gestures are often paired with lyrics, but that is not the case here. The first instance of dance is right at the transition into this section where Alputila dances the kind of flowing arm movements off to one side and then the other that indicate "hula" even for the non-expert viewer. This kind of gesture does not carry any specific meaning, although the arms flow from the body like waves. The dance during the instrumental sections contrasts with the shot of her singing where the camera is close-up on Alputila, who often looks directly into the camera. The combinations of music, dance, and song in the third part captures the island feeling that Deleuze describes as, "or it is dreaming of starting from scratch, recreating, beginning anew" (2004, 10).

Right before the line, "this is the end of my story," Alputila gestures with her arms pointing on a diagonal to the sky. In hula, this gesture typically indicates mountain, cliff, or valley, even though the lyrics in this section do not mention such. The gesture might be a representation of Diamond Head, part of her present in Hawai'i. But also, it hails back to the past, to the mountain in the title of the song—Salahutu. Time again blurs through travel because "nostalgia happens in our present, and it is about our future" (Deseyn et al. 2014, 135).

In *Paper Boats*, the mountain/cliff on the island becomes a place of past and future for Kugy as well.[24] The main part of the novel *Paper Boats* ends on a cliff. Earlier in the book, Keenan took Kugy there because it was one of his favorite spots. They haven't seen each other in years and only met up at Eko and Noni's wedding. Keenan makes Kugy agree to come with him for twenty-four hours, no cell phone and she can't ask any questions. At the end of the first day, she falls asleep in the car. When Kugy wakes up, she is on the cliff, "stretched out beneath her was the vast ocean, where she could see waves churning and whirling, breaking and falling, sweeping across an expanse of coral and white foam" (PB 312).[25] It is on that beach the two promise to continue following their

lyrics and additional commentary on the hula in the video.

24 To be clear, I am not suggesting that Dee Lestari or Vanessa Alputila were writing in response to each other or were even aware of the other. Rather, I look at these works in conversation as a means to better understand how geography, movement, and nostalgia function as features of trespassing that is present in both these works.

25 *Di hadapannya terhampar laut luas. Dan di bawah sana, tampak ombak berputar dan berpusar, saling memecah dan mengempas, menyapu hamparan karang dengan buih putih* (PK 346).

passion—together he will paint and she will write fairytales—"Then, as if it were an ocean wave, it flowed into their hearts, and stayed [...] Because only when they were together could he taste eternity. If only for a moment" (PB 318).[26]

There on the cliff, Kugy and Keenan are caught between the past and future, in what Suvendrini Perera calls a borderscape: "the inclusion of different temporalities and overlapping emplacements as well as of emergent spatial organizations. A shifting and conflicted space" (2009, 58). When they return to that place at the end of the novel, their promise is finally realized. This time however, the view of the turbulent ocean is replaced by Kugy. "His view was unobstructed once again. Kugy was now lying beside him. And Keenan couldn't remember when the sky had looked so beautiful" (PB 388).[27] Like in Alputila's song, the geography mirrors emotion. Boats are the vehicle of dreams that Kugy releases at the end of the novel. The beach, however, provides a space that is itself structured by what cultural studies scholar Peter Osterried describes as "multiple binary opposites, all of them defined by the notion of the borderline" (2020, 7).

Re-Orientations

The plot of *Paper Boats* is more than a romance; it is about characters discovering themselves as they realize their dreams. How does Alputila's song dream about the past while dancing in the present? How else might boats and islands function as vehicles for dreams; what does it mean to realize your dreams? In this section I want to look at the work of short story writer, Lily Yulianti Farid,[28] especially her story *Dapur*, or "The Kitchen."[29] The plot focuses on Ruth, a woman who migrated

26 *Sejenak berayun di udara, lalu bagaikan gelombang air bisikan itu mengalir, sampai akhirnya berlabuh di hati... Karena hanya saat mereka bersama, ia bisa mencicipi keabadian. Meski hanya sesaat* (PK 318).

27 *Pandangannya kembali tak terhalang. Orang itu kini ikut berbaring di sebelahnya. Kugy. Dan sepanjang ingatan Keenan, langit tak pernah seindah itu* (PK 432).

28 Following the convention of others writing about Lily Yulianti Farid, I will refer to her as Lily.

29 This short story by Lily Yulianti Farid was originally published in the newspaper *Kompas* in 2008 and then included in the short story collection *Ayahmu Bulan, Engkau Matahari* (*My Father the Moon, I am the Sun*) published in 2012. Several different versions of the story appear on various internet sites.

from Ambon to Makassar by boat to start a new life. The story is told through the eyes of the daughter of the bakery where Ruth works. The act of making flour and water into bread and pastries represent the women's strength that they bring to the different social and political conflicts that the characters must navigate. "The Kitchen" was adapted into a solo performance by Luna Vidya under the direction of Riri Riza. The monologue version was most recently performed at the Makassar International Writers Festival (MIWF) in 2024 in memory of Lily, who passed away on 10 March 2023 in Melbourne.

Lily's life and work focused on creativity, and she strove to empower women through literature and the performing arts. In addition to being a popular short story writer, she was a journalist, an academic, and headed the creation of various organizations and spaces for women and LGBTQ folks. Her work centered on Makassar, the fifth largest city in Indonesia. Makassar, however, is separated from the cultural hubs of Java and Bali and located on the straits of Makassar in South Sulawesi; it functions as an important global connecting point. In 2011, Lily, together with film director Riri Riza, founded the Makassar International Writers Festival (MIWF) to offer a radically inclusive space to showcase arts and literature from Eastern Indonesia within transnational discourses.

The 2024 festival's theme "M/Othering" and the performance of *The Kitchen* commemorating Lily offers a useful lens to think about the content of the story and larger questions of women's creativity. "M/Othering" expressed the seemingly contradictory ideas of "'mothering' being the practice of caring, and 'Othering' of treating someone as different or 'Other' to oneself" (Hughes 2024). Although the short story is in first person, Luna Vidya complicates the relationship between mother and Other in her performance because she embodies three characters, the daughter Kalyla (as a child and as an adult), Ruth, and Kalyla's mother. In the short story, Ruth drives Kalyla's memories forward, but dies halfway through. In the play, Ruth remains a central character throughout, her journey across the sea mirrors Kalyla's journey of selfhood. Ruth and Kalyla's mother become wrapped up into one, which is foregrounded in the performance with one actor playing all the roles.

Central to the Vidya's adaptation of the story is Ruth's desire to go to Java. Older Kalyla explains that Ruth loved Java, but even more, "Anything beyond her imagination was always connected with Java"

(Vidya 2014, 162). Java symbolizes the realization of Ruth's dreams:

> Java was the farthest place that Ruth could ever imagine going. And outside of Java, there was nowhere at all... Ruth's life was a journey, one that would not end until she set foot in the Javalands—which is what she used to call the island... In our kitchen, Ruth often recalled the stages in her life's journey—one that had brought her here, to this kitchen and into our lives, but one that would, one day, begin again (Vidya 2014, 164).[30]

Ruth sees her current situation as a temporary stop on her way to Java. Perhaps like many Eastern Indonesian artists, Ruth cannot feel complete without recognition in Java. Scholar of Indonesian arts Caitlin Hughes, writing about the literary festival for *Inside Indonesia*, uses ocean metaphors to describe the festival's impact for artists in Makassar:

> Observers from afar may talk of a wave of visibility for art from Eastern Indonesia that may be encountered sometime in the distant future. What became clear to me at MIWF 2024 is that this "wave" for the arts—plural—is already here. It is being shaped by a variety of leading cross-disciplinary storytellers locally and intra-nationally (2024).

Waves travel across long distances, enabling locomotion and reaching a distant shore. Hughes emphasizes the importance of visibility, and by this she means visibility to the center of Indonesian culture, Java. In her desire to travel to Java, the character Ruth inverts both the gendered and geographic power dynamic inherent in islands (Kothari and Palis 2025, 242).

Happy(?) Endings

Ruth never makes it to Java. The cargo ship she traveled on stopped at many other places, and the journey made her seasick, "After a while, I just couldn't take it anymore. So I got off the ship here, in Makassar" (Vidya 2014, 165). Rather than reading that as a failure, I think Vidya, following Lily's original story, re-imagines Makassar as the final destination and landing-point.

Unlike Ruth, Kayla never leaves the place of her childhood. Kalyla does not physically travel to a new land, rather she begins and ends

30 I have made multiple attempts to obtain the Indonesian original of this script, but I have not been successful. As a result, my comments are based on the English translation only.

the play in the kitchen. However, Kalyla's rejection of "homeland," as personified in the figure of the mother, is just as complete. At the beginning of the play, Older Kalyla (the grown-up version of the child at the center of the story) claims her identity through an articulating what she is not. Speaking to an invisible person—someone who is attempting to involve her in some kind of corrupt scheme—she declares that she is not going to "be part of your scam." During the course of the play, she learns that her mother was in a relationship with a married crooked official, and together they forged receipts to cheat the government out of money. Kalyla declares she is not going to be trapped, stating "I am a different person from my mother," until the final "Well, my name is Kalyla. And I am not my mother" (Vidya 2014, 161–62). Likewise, the play ends with Kalyla pronouncing, "I decided not to try to uncover Mother's secrets. By doing so, I might find myself trapped in the secret tunnels of her dark cave" (Vidya 2014, 171).

Paper Boats ends with one last letter from Kugy to Neptune. She releases it from a boat, far off from the ocean shore. It says:

> *Nep,*
>
> *It's been years since I have written. Don't be mad, but I would like to resign. I have no more secrets to tell you, or dreams— because we're living those dreams. Now. And forever.*
>
> *K&K*
>
> (*And a little K on the way*) (PB 389).[31]

After releasing the paper boat into the water, Kugy paddles back to shore, and jumps out of the boat into the water and Keenan's arms. Unlike many of the other stories in this book, *Paper Boats* ends with a conventional happy ending. Lestari explains (in English) her view on happy endings:

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31 *Neptunus,*
Tahunan nggak nulis surat ke markas. Jangan marah, ya.
Tapi kami memang mau berhenti jadi agen.
Tidak ada lagi rahasia. Tidak ada lagi mimpi.
Karena mimpi itu sudah kami jalani. Sekarang.
Selama-lamanya.
K&K.
(*dan satu lagi K kecil ... masih di perut*) (PK 433).

> Not every story in real life ends up with a happy ending. Sad, tragic, black endings are real. But I just hate it when I've spent so much time and energy to finish up a book, a thick one, and finally stumbled with a sad, helpless feeling at the end. It just SUCKS! I'd like to feel empowered, inspired, and satisfied at the end of my struggle.[32]

Indeed, a happy ending is essential for a fairytale, and it makes sense that Lestari would follow that form until the end. However, does the happy ending, Kugy and Keenan together having a child, mean that the novel reinforces rather than subverts the ideal of women as "good wives and mothers"?

The late John Garder has been quoted as saying, "There are only two plots in all of literature. You go on a journey or a stranger comes to town," but women were often denied the journey and left at home waiting for a stranger (Morris 1993, xv). Likewise, in literature and colonial history, men on boats discovered and conquered islands; the islands, like women, were interpreted as passive and therefore ripe for the taking. At the end of the novel, Kugy is the one riding in the boat to Keenan, and therefore inverts that literary (and actual) history. Writing, music, and performance, sent out into the world like paper boats across the ocean, give the women in this chapter the power to trespass. Through travel they claim their identities; like Kalyla, they "are not my mother," but find their dreams in new lands.

32 See https://dee-55days.blogspot.com/search?updated-max=2007-10-27T07:55:00-07:00&max-results=7&start=49&by-date=false

BY PLANE

5. Flying Away

> Airports are in between spaces. Once you pass through security, you are no longer "here" but you are not yet "there." They are liminal in that they are a place of possibility that often reestablishes social order through experience. Tourists have exotic experiences, business people close deals, and families are united or torn apart (Huang et al. 2018, 3).

> This [airport] wasn't pretending to be the future; it *was* the future (Gordon 2004, 2).

The novel *Keberangkatan* (*Departures*) by Nurhayati Sri Hardini Siti Nukatin, better known as Nh. Dini, begins and ends in an airport, which I will examine as place that complicates identity, gender, and the boundaries of nation and home. The narrative centers on Elisabeth Frissart, or Elisa, a woman caught between Indonesia, the country of her birth, and the Netherlands, her ancestral homeland. Born to Indo parents—individuals of mixed Dutch and native heritage—Elisa finds herself at a crossroads as her parents prepare to leave. She works as a stewardess for Garuda Airlines, Indonesia's flagship carrier, whose history is deeply tied to the nation's journey toward independence and modernization.

In Indonesia, tradition emphasizes the past and is locally orientated, while modernity looks to the future and emphasizes global connections. Airplanes and airports have often represented Indonesia's modern ambitions. For example, in the introduction to her book on women and modernity in Java, Suzanne April Brenner describes changes happening around Solo in the 1980s as evidence of modernization. New houses, restaurants, and a shopping mall all indicate progress, but more importantly, "rumor had it that the city's quiet airport was going to be upgraded to an international airport, foreshadowing much greater change" (1998, 3–4).Throughout the novel, various modes of travel serve as metaphors for the tension between tradition and modernity, and

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between Indonesia and the West. Like the promise of modernity, airports are dynamic spaces. On one hand, the novel describes the airport as a confusing space, where people are rushing around to leave their "home" for what is supposed to be their "homeland." On the other hand, the airport also offers opportunities for calm, clarity, and independence.

Dini's descriptions of air travel in the novel remind me of the first time I went to Indonesia in 2004. I had just graduated with my MFA in Asian Performance from the University of Hawai'i where I began studying Southeast Asian performance. I was heading to an advanced language program, the Consortium of Teaching Indonesian and Malay (COTIM) in Manado, North Sulawesi.[1] It was not possible to book a ticket from Honolulu to Manado, so my plan was to fly to the Soekarno-Hatta Airport in Jakarta and then book my ticket. To be honest, I spoke very little Indonesian and had only been accepted to the study program because it was only a few years after the 2002 Bali bombings and other qualified students had pulled out of the program. Indonesia's first presidential election was also scheduled for that summer, raising additional concerns for violence. This environment of uncertainty opened an opportunity for me that inspired a lifelong interest in Indonesian history and politics. In this chapter, I draw from my own first experience navigating physical and social spaces in Indonesia alongside the ways the main character of *Departures* travels across boundaries of family, race, and love during a key point of Indonesia's history. I will highlight these memories in italics to assist the reader in moving between the two texts.

The novel is set in 1957 and 1958, about ten years after the Netherlands recognized Indonesian sovereignty. During those first ten years many Dutch and Indos fled the archipelago, but many others remained because they had established families and businesses. In 1957, however Dutch companies in Indonesia were nationalized and over 46,000 Dutch employees were compelled to leave the country with very little notice. It was growing increasingly dangerous to remain.[2] Thus, people of Dutch

1 The language program still exists, although it has dropped the Malay and shortened the acronym to COTI. More information can be found at https://coticornell.wordpress.com/

2 Of course, the status of Eurasians, or Indos, was complicated in both Indonesia and the Netherlands. The period of the novel is not the only moment of mass exodus from the islands. For an excellent history of the period before the novel see van der Veur (1954).

descent flocked to the airports to evacuate to their "homeland," even if their families had not stepped foot in the Netherlands for generations. Many of these evacuees were of mixed, or Indo, descent, like Elisa. At first, Elisa remains in Indonesia while the rest of her family evacuates. She works at the new Indonesian airline, falls in love with a Javanese youth, and struggles to understand her identity in the context of the emerging nation. Throughout the novel, Elisa trespasses into various social spheres as she searches for a home and family. The novel ends with Elisa applying for a visa to join her family in the Netherlands.

Departures was first published in Indonesia in 1977. This was Nh. Dini's twelfth novel, and she also wrote poetry, plays, and short stories. Born in 1936 to a family of Javanese aristocrats in Semerang, Central Java, Dini had four brothers and sisters. Her experience working as an airline stewardess before marrying French Diplomat Yves Coffin clearly influences the novel. Even after she married, she traveled around the world with her husband, spending time in Japan, Cambodia, the US, France, and the Netherlands. They also had two children.[3] Their marriage was not happy, and several of her novels detail the terrible abuses she endured. In 1977, Dini separated from her husband and finally divorced in 1984. After a brief period working as a governess in Paris, she returned to her hometown, just outside of Yogyakarta in Semarang, determined to make her living as a writer. Dini died in a car accident in 2018.

Dini is best known for her semi-autobiographical novels and memoirs, which consistently blur the boundaries between fiction and reality. Dini began writing stories during her school years to process the profound loss of her beloved father in 1950. At just twenty years old, these stories were published as her first collection, *Dua Dunia* (*Two Worlds*). Despite her substantial literary output and active participation in the intellectual and literary circles of her time, Dini's work, like so many other women authors, was not considered serious literature.[4]

3 It is interesting to mention that one of her sons, Pierre Coffin, was the director for all four movies in the *Despicable Me* franchise.

4 In an article for *Inside Indonesia* exploring the creation of a feminine literary history in Indonesia, writer Intan Paramaditha notes: "Writers in the 1970s and 1980s such as La Rose, Ike Supomo, Titi Said, and—sometimes—Nh. Dini were dismissed because their works were not considered serious enough. Jakob Sumardjo, one of Indonesia's most prominent literary critics, wrote that women's writing was more

Dini defied this marginalization, earning numerous awards during her lifetime and seeing her works translated into several languages. Today, her literary contributions remain widely celebrated, with her books enjoying continued popularity through reprints and translations.

Indonesian literary historian Michael Nieto Garcia aptly describes Dini as "the link between the older generation of women writers and the new" (2007). Dini is the earliest author featured in my book, with nearly all the other works included having been written or produced in the twenty-first century. I chose to structure the book thematically rather than chronologically, aiming to highlight the circular and interconnected nature of the ideas within these texts—connections that extend beyond direct lines of influence.

At the surface, the story of *Departures* has all the trappings of popular fiction targeted at the growing number of women readers in Indonesia during the 1970s. Elisa experiences tragic love punctuated by family drama. Dini asserts that she uses these themes to focus on important questions of her day:

> When I write it is more a matter of social relations, of pointing to those things which I regard as unjust—That's what the themes of my stories are really about, about life itself. Injustice, because that exists. About injustice between men and women, that's what I want to point out. But socio-economic issues, too, and love and affection because that is part of life too. I think those three t.hings are never boring; they are perpetual themes, the classics (Dini quoted in Hill 1993, 154)

My first flight I described at the beginning of this chapter began my lifelong interest in and connection to Indonesia. My own experience punctuates the role of personal change, opportunity, and global connection provided by airports and airplanes in Dini's novel. Throughout the novel, Elisa discovers her identity and negotiates discourses of ethnicity and gender in the early years of the nation. In this chapter, I focus on the mixed sense of discovery and limbo as represented within the in-between space of the airport, contrasted with the airplane as a symbol of *kemajuan* or "advancement/progress," to examine how Elisa uses travel to trespass away from society's restraints.

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concerned with romance and domestic matters. Women occupied a marginal space in literary history, and any subversive gestures were normalized within the rubrics of the private and the domestic" (2016).

Indo Identity

In the novel, her friends introduce her as, "she's Elisa, the Indo" (28).[5] Why does Dini, who was not an Indo, make Elisa's identity as an Indo central to the novel? Indos, the general term for someone of mixed Indonesian (or native) and Dutch ancestry, were the middle of the social order in colonial Indonesia. But the Indo was out-of-place in both social realms. Thomas M. Hunter looks at the Indo figure within several Indonesian literary works and concludes, "The Indo is thus at once a figure of 'otherness' around which Indonesian identities can be shaped, and a figure for the ambiguities and anxieties that continue to haunt Indonesians as they position themselves in relationship to perceptions of 'tradition-modernity' or 'native-foreign.'" Hunter theorizes the Indo as both an ideal of INDOnesian identity and/or an alien who embodies ambiguity (2002, 145).[6]

Indos, the local term for Indo-Europeans or Eurasians, came from mostly Dutch descent, but other European ancestry as well, mixed with Asian.[7] These mixed marriages dated back to the early days of the colony. Men were encouraged to develop relationships with local women so they would not be lured back home by a white bride (Hellwig 2014). The children of these relationships formed a permanent society in the Indies and worked for the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in a variety of roles. This changed in 1825, after the Dutch government took over for the VOC, when it was declared that only men born and educated in the Netherlands could serve in the civil service; this created

5 *Elisa, anak Indo* (*Keberangkatan*, 38). Within historical and other sources that describe the people of mixed-race in Indonesia, the terms "Eurasian" and "Indo" are used almost interchangeably, and preferences seem to vary. I primarily use the term Indo here because it emphasizes Indonesia as the location and discourse as my focus. It also mirrors the language used by Dini in the novel. For more on the variances within this terminology see Hewett 2016, especially 24.

6 In this chapter, I focus on the literary figure of the Indo and how different parts of history resonate in order to contextualize the way Dini uses the Indo identity in the story. I would not consider the novel a historical document, but rather Dini is using the history of this moment and perceptions of Indo identity to support the themes of the novel. Her other, more biographical novels, also explore themes of mixed-identities and living between cultures. For a detailed account of Eurasians in Indonesia, see Taylor 2009.

7 The men were mostly Dutch, or other European, and the women came from a variety of backgrounds, including various indigenous ethnic groups or even from China or other Asian countries (Zara 2022, 62).

a significant rift between those born in or outside of what would become Indonesia.[8] Whether one was considered Indo or European became a fluid identity based on parentage, marriage, education, and business in the early twentieth century (Hewett 2016, 22–23). The most important distinction remained that Indos were not native, but they weren't European either. Indos existed in a shifting middle ground between Europeans and natives, never fully belonging to either—just like the airport exists between destinations. By making Elisa an Indo, Dini enhances the instability of the character's identity.

After independence, Indos were generally perceived as an ethnic group, similar to Javanese or Balinese, but the Indo identity was more of something that one did, rather than simply what one was. "The Indo-Europeans were not only distinctive because of their mixed-blood, but also their social characteristics, such as the Christian religion they professed, the European culture they practiced, the Dutch language they spoke, and their choice to distance themselves from the natives because they considered their socio-economic position to be higher than that of the natives" (Zara 2022, 62). Elisa and her family are marked as Indo because their family name is Dutch, they speak primarily Dutch at home and with friends, and they are Christian.

The favored status of Indos changed during the Japanese occupation and right after. Indos were subject to violence, hatred, and mistrust because it was assumed that they sided with the Dutch colonizers in the Netherland's struggle to maintain control. After independence was acknowledged in 1949, leaders struggled to determine how to unite such a diverse population into a cohesive nation; this included the Indos.[9] Historian Muhammad Yuanda Zara argues that the alienation of Indos from the archipelago is not the only side of the story; that there were considerable efforts as well, from both sides, to integrate Indos as citizens within the new nation (2022, 63). The procedure for acquiring

8 The VOC, or Dutch East India Company, was a powerful trading company established in 1602 that played a crucial role in the spice trade and colonial expansion in Southeast Asia. The VOC ultimately dissolved in 1799 due to financial difficulties, mismanagement, and increasing competition, leading to the Dutch government taking control of its assets and territories.

9 Indonesia contains over 300 distinct ethnic groups with different languages, customs, and religions. The struggle towards an "imagined community" is well-documented. For example see Anderson 2006.

citizenship, the matter of religion and language, and the position of former civil and military officials (active and retired), where all relevant questions (Van der Veur 1960, 46).

The new government strove to do away with social divisions based on ethnicity. All the ethnic groups in Indonesia were declared equal, but ethnic Arab, Chinese, and Indo-Europeans presented a more complex problem. They were outsiders, often considered less by the Dutch colonial administration, but many Indonesians were also suspect of their allegiances as well. The government, however, wanted to keep them as citizens because of their wealth and (often superior) education. Indos were urged to declare Indonesia their "homeland" (Zara 2022, 71–72). Elisa grew up with those privileges, including attending private school.

This "Indo-problem" brought the central question into high relief, "What was an Indonesian citizen?" Some felt it was a matter of name, dress, and religion and urged the Indos to adapt a Javanese name, wear a *sarong*, and accept Islam. These actions, along with their loyalty to Indonesia, made them "New Citizens" (Zara 2022, 75–77). In the novel, Elisa's identity as Indonesian is expressed in similar terms. She feels like a "real Indonesian" because she can speak Indonesian language, eats Indonesian food, and even looks Indonesian (*Departures*, 19–20).[10]

Indo women were seen as less than their European counterparts, and they and their children were often abandoned when a European wife returned or became available. Native women who were mistresses to European men likewise lost their place in native society; Indos were stuck in between (Hewett 2016, 33). Elisa's Indo identity is but one contradiction in a story laden with them. Throughout the novel, airplanes and other modes of transportation highlight the different ways Elisa navigates identity and seeks to trespass outside the boundaries of how history seeks to define her as an Indo woman.

Contradictions of Modernity

Travel enables connection and alienation. In my experience, flying to Indonesia in 2004 was not as easy as it is today. In addition to my inability to book a ticket for my final destination, I had to spend an overnight in Taipei enroute. I was

10 *Keberangkatan*, 29.

exhausted and overwhelmed when I finally stepped off the plane into the busy Jakarta airport. In my memory I can still see the red tile floors, people running around, and pushy men asking me if I needed a taxi or help with my luggage. I somehow made my way to the ticket counter for Garuda Airlines and inquired about a ticket to Manado in my halting Indonesian. My only options were a flight leaving in three hours or to wait a week for another flight. I couldn't wait because the program was set to begin, so I took the first flight. I tried calling my contact in Manado to let them know of my early arrival, but I could not figure out how to make the pay phone work. I also couldn't call my family back in the United States to let them know about my change of plans. The airport was a place of noise and confusion, and I was stuck in that limbo state.

I arrived in Manado late at night. This airport was small and quiet; I vividly remember the shining white of the tile floors. After another attempt to use a pay phone, I finally contacted someone from the COTIM program who was able to pick me up in a couple of hours. In the dark, I sat outside with my suitcase and waited. The quiet of the night and the bright lights outside the cement building were a stark contrast with the hubbub in Jakarta. The contradictions within the two airports I traveled through illustrated the complexity of Indonesian modernity as it negotiates progress and tradition.

Elisa's problem of identity and agency is a problem of modernity. Before and after Indonesian independence emerged, the idea that "to be an Indonesian was to be modern" (Lindsay 2011, 288) shaped cultural and political life. Historian Adrian Vickers explains how in this modernity Indonesian culture was a deliberate project that blended tradition with new forms of expression. Its "ideas and ideals were projected into the future" (2013, 391).[11] Additionally, many of these debates maneuvered tensions between East and West; frictions that are at the heart of Elisa's identity as an Indo and a woman.

Modernity has been connected explicitly with Dini. Author Laksmi Pamuntjak describes Dini, as the quintessential "modern woman," with these words:

11 "Tradition" remains a complicated concept with important connections to heritage and identity that reveals itself in practices, beliefs, and material forms. In this chapter, tradition, however, primarily appears as a foil to "modernity," and often contains a negative connotation. The novel and sources regarding modernity and the "modern" in this chapter use tradition reflexively without defining the term or considering the different values tradition indicates.

> The modern person, says Walter Benjamin, is someone who chooses, who is always positioning him or herself as a subject. Dini was 'modern' in that sense: She had the courage to make herself the subject of her life and her fiction and never felt she had to explain, much less apologize for, the autobiographical aspects of her writing. (*Asymptote*)

Dini's engagement with technologies of transportation and Indonesian history reveals ways that women authors trespass into masculine spheres even as they focus on seemingly domestic and popular topics such as romance. Dini draws the reader's attention to various levels of meaning: conversations and actions between men and women; between friends and family; details about the setting, especially natural settings; and descriptions and uses of transportation. In my analysis of trespassing, I will center transportation, especially airplanes, and by extension the airport; airplanes offer an appropriate space to set the novel's discussions of identity because of their connection to modernity.

In *Departures*, Dini often challenges modernity as a utopian monolith. Contemporary literary scholar Diah Ariani Arimbi describes that modernity in Indonesian literature was often equated with and represented by urban centers, especially Jakarta: "the only place where everything seems beautiful, perfect, and magical where the memory it carries only signify attainment of romantic fulfillment [sic]" (Arimbi 2015, 165). Contrary to this trend, instead of a perfect Jakarta, Dini describes it as poor, overcrowded, and that streams of water invade every crevice. Low wattage bulbs, oil lamps, and smoke from chimneys poor out of the *kampung*, or slums. The water and the juxtaposition of electric and oil lamps emphasize how place/society is changing, slowly and inevitably. The water is everywhere, and as anyone who has experienced a leak in their house knows, small streams of water can cause serious damage and changes over time. Thus, Dini creates a Jakarta, and by extension, an Indonesia, that is unsteady and shifting. Within this murky setting, there is one place of stability and light—the airport.

> Far from this miserable cluster of shacks, rows of brick buildings and houses that stood alongside asphalt roads, seemingly silent, as if it is inhabiting a separate world. Here the light emanating from the glass windows and doors engendered a feeling of warmth. Among them were the buildings of the Kemayoran Airport (*Departures*, 1).[12]

12 The translator of the novel, Toni Pollard, simplifies the richer description that contrasts the airport with the chaos of the outside world at the beginning of the

In Dini's description, the airport, and its immediate surrounding buildings, are clean, sturdy, and modern. The airport stands apart from the chaos of the city because of its connection to progress and the world. It asserts that modernity must be global.

Dini complicates the modernity of the airport with the messiness of human life. The passengers heading for immigration are hurried, "jostling each other as if they are afraid they might miss the plane" (5).[13] In the center of the chaos is a young white girl precariously holding a tin of tamarind seeds. Suddenly she drops it, scattering the seeds all over the floor. No one stops, instead they crunch the seeds under their feet as they rush through. Described as both sweet and sour, tamarind seeds contain many healing properties. Like the chaos of modernity, tamarind seeds are a food of contradiction. Some people helped the girl pick up the seeds, but then a man came with a broom to sweep them away. The description—"The child's gaze, clear and innocent, was in such contrast to the gloomy sky of the day" (*Departures*, 6)[14] echoes the Dinie's description of how the airport contrasts with the city.

The contrast between modernity and tradition has special significance for considering the social roles of women in Indonesia in the late 1950s. Barbara Hatley describes how the Javanese/Islamic concept of *kodrat* reflected the ways Indonesian women had to navigate these dichotomies. On one hand, the Indonesian constitution guaranteed equality for women and the opportunity to be involved outside the home in political or civic matters. On the other hand, women's *kodrat*, or god-given nature, asserted that Indonesian women were inherently different from men (and Western woman). This meant care should be taken in women's dress, activities, and education to not violate women's nature. Likewise, Dini describes a world where women struggle to exist in either of the two primary realms of identity—modern progress and tradition. These are articulated in the novel through the promise of the future, represented by the modern airplane and the airport, in contrast

book. Perhaps Dini was able to assume her reader did not need such a direct statement to locate the airport in the novel? See pp. 9–10 of *Keberangkatan* for the full descriptions. For space, I won't try to quote those pages in their entirety.

13 *Mereka berdesakan seperti ketakutan ketinggalan pesawat* (*Keberangkatan*, 13).

14 *Sekali lagi hatiku dilimpahi perasaan iba yang tidak dapat kutapsirkan. Pandang bocoh yang jernih tampa dosa itu semakin berlawanan dengan muramnya langit hari itu* (*Keberangkatan,* 14).

to tradition, represented as Javanese customs and performance. Elisa is always in between, her life is like the limbo of the airport, it is only at the end that potential surfaces.

Stranger and Family—Talib

The main plot of *Departures* focuses on two parallel journeys that Elisa takes as she seeks her identity and a sense of belonging. Like an airplane she travels these paths with focus and purpose, but at the end she arrives to another in-between space, another airport. First is Elisa's search for family. Growing up, Elisa did not get along with her mother, who was often violent and cruel. Her father never tried to help her or her siblings, "Calmly my father watched her beat me. He didn't utter a word" (13).[15] After Elisa moved out, her mother came to where she was staying to beg her to come home. Elisa refused, knowing her mother only desired the money she was earning at the airline. Even so, Elisa felt conflicted, because "As an adult, I understood that parents are fundamental to our birth, central to where we came from" (12).[16]

Elisa grew up in Jakarta but was born in Surabaya. "Those times were just a blank page to me." Fleeting images of a red house, a garden swing, and a man painting in the corner would race through her mind. "I often wanted to recall those images but at a slower pace" (20),[17] but they refused to cooperate. Elisa finally dismisses them as dreams or memory of a film, that is until she meets Romeo Beick at a party to celebrate a friend's marriage.

Romeo Beick was a Catholic priest who had survived the war and had been living in Indonesia for decades. Beick declares, "I'm a true Indonesian. I know more regional languages than most Indonesians" and even became an Indonesian citizen (*Departures*, 68–69).[18] Sitting out in the garden after the others go inside to eat, Beick comments that he

15 *Dengan tenangnya ayah melihat ibuku memukuliku. Tak sepatah kata pun keluar dari mulutnya* (*Keberagnkatan*, 21).

16 *Pikiran dewasaku mengerti bahwa orang tua merupakan pokok kelahiran, tiang kokoh suatu asal-usal* (*Keberangkatan*, 20).

17 *Padaku sendiri, yang tinggal hanylah semacam halaman kosong... tetapi dengan irama yang lebih lambat* (*Keberangkatan*, 29).

18 *Saya sudah betul-betul orang Indonesia. Saya mengatahui bahasa-bahasa daerah melebihi orang-orang Indonesia asli* (*Keberangkatan*, 80–81).

might know her family, the Frissarts, back in Surabaya. He continues to explain that the Frissart he knew worked on cargo ships—he was responsible for the supplies, but also handled the loading and unloading of cargo (70). Elisa realizes this potential family member might hold the key to her memory and identities; I feel this connection is emphasized by the description of travel—the ship and the cargo. The link is confirmed when Beick describes the house, the garden swing, and the painter. Elisa makes the decision to find this house and learn about her missing family.

Hoping to get more information about Surabaya, Elisa goes to visit her estranged older sister, and when they embrace, tears run down her sister's face. They talk nonstop in Dutch, catching up on each other's lives, but when Elisa finally asks her sister about the house in Surabaya, the sister goes silent. Finally, though, she begins to talk about the past.

Her sister recounts that Fred Frissart was the man their mother initially married, but their mother's infidelity cast doubt on the true paternity of her children. Among the men in their lives was a young, handsome painter named Talib, who also lived in the house. After Fred's death, their mother married his brother, and the family relocated. It was then that Elisa realized the man she had thought was her father was actually her uncle. The two sisters were eventually sent to an orphanage and attended Catholic schools. After three years, Elisa returned to live with her family, while her sister only visited on weekends.

Elisa refocuses her search on the painter, Talib, and this search takes her down many paths. With the help of Romeo Beick, she is introduced to a businessman named Mr. Sayekti, who has known Talib since his youth. After weeks of searching, she finally arranges to meet Mr. Sayekti at a restaurant in the airport.

Talib, Elisa learns, studied painting in India and Europe. He was a moderately successful artist and often moved around living in different places. Talib had a small house in Surabaya where an old woman lived. He sent her money from time to time. Mr. Sayekti visited Talib there every time he went to Surabaya. But Talib had fallen very ill a few months ago and was now paralyzed. Mr. Sayekti urged him to seek treatment at the hospital, but Talib refused. Elisa's friend urges her to visit, because maybe Elisa can persuade him to seek medical help. Time, however, they realize is of the essence.

The emotional difficulty of visiting Talib is described in terms of

travel. Elisa must persuade someone to trade flights with her so she can go to Surabaya. She will then need to convince the captain to let her leave the airport and go. As she makes these plans, Elisa must hurry because the car is coming to take her and the others home after work. After waiting for the car, it always would take an hour or two to get home from the airport. "There was no apparent reason for this... Everything was disorganized, including the transport system." Differences in gender and status made the situation worse. Inside the car, men would take the better seats and "put on a blank expression" if a woman asked for the seat (101).[19]

Elisa is the only stewardess on the flight to Surabaya, and keeps busy with repetitive tasks. After landing, she does not know the part of town where Talib lived and has to ask for directions. Dini describes the trip as a journey with many steps. Elisa first travels by trishaw and then on foot through the maze of lanes. The weather was hot and dusty, making Elisa wet with sweat. She had to go down a tiny alley before arriving in front of the door. A woman answers the door and cautions Elisa against visiting because Talib is not like he was and might throw her out.

Inside the room, Elisa sits on a chair next to Talib who is lying in bed. She greets him, without thinking, in Dutch, "Hello, *Om,"* emphasizing the connection between origins and identity. "People can't deny where they come from or the language they'd spoken from birth. You carry it with you and it springs up whenever you experience something that must disturb or delight you" (105).[20] After a rocky start, they finally reminisce about the past, and Elisa learns about a new identity through this found family. "I used to call you Tus because you were born in August. I never liked the name Elyse that everyone called you" (109).[21] And again, flying becomes a sign of freedom and escape—Talib describes how when she was a toddler he would push her on the swing. Elisa would laugh and exclaim, "It's like flying. It feels like flying" (110).[22]

19 *Kami tidak pernah mengatahui mengapa. Mungkin aturan kerja serta organisasinya yang kurang tepat; yang membuang muka tak acuh* (*Keberangkatan*, 113).

20 *Manusia tidak dapat mengingkari dari mana dia berasal... Itu terbawa dan mencuat pada waktu-waktu dia mengalami sesuatu yang paling memukul maupun paling membahagiakannya* (*Keberangkatan*, 118).

21 *Tus. Ya. Kau keberi nama kesayangan Tus. Karena kau lahir pada bulan Augustus. Aku tidak pernah menyukai panggilan yang disebut oleh orang-orang lain: Elyse* (*Keberangkatan*, 122).

22 *Seperti terbang rasanya. Seperti terbang!* (*Keberangkatan*, 122).

Elisa visits Talib frequently and eventually persuades him to seek treatment at a hospital. She also arranges for his paintings to be sold in an airport gift shop, hoping to rekindle his interest in his former life. Talib later transfers to a hospital in Jakarta, where Elisa visits him every day. Though she never confirms whether he is truly her father, in Talib, she discovers a sense of family she had long sought.

Family and Stranger—Sukoharjito

Intertwined with the account of Elisa searching for and finding her biological roots, is her search for love and marriage. At first, Elisa feels that marriage might provide a means to escape the unhappiness of her childhood home. Once she begins dating a Javanese man she wonders, "Was Sukoharjito the one I really wanted? Wouldn't any of the other Javanese men I knew be suitable to become my husband and therefore turn me into a true Indonesian?" (26).[23] Elisa realizes that marriage was no longer just a way to escape her family, but it could also "save me from any uncertainty about my race or the country where I belonged" (27).[24] For Elisa, marriage seems to offer a means to solve the identity crisis of being Indo; but the reality makes it difficult to trespass across those boundaries.

About two hours' drive south from the city of Manado is Bukit Kasih in the area of Tomohon. Located near two volcanos, Tomohon is a city known for its flowers and beautiful geography. The Minhasaan people who live there are primarily Christian, and the city has been known for its extreme tastes in food, including dog, cat, and bats.[25] *The trip there on windy, narrow roads was not easy and made my heart leap in my chest. Tomohon was a beautiful and peaceful place—a great contrast to the developing city of Manado with its shopping mall and broken sidewalks. I traveled there with several other tutors and students in my program.*

23 *Benar-benarkah Sukoharjito yang kukehendaki? Tidakkah aku mengharapkan pemuda Jawa yang mana pun dari lingkunanku untuk menjadi seorang suami dan sekaligus menjadikan diriku seorang anak Indonesia tulen* (*Keberangkatan*, 36).

24 *kini kuanggap sebagai titik tujuan yang menyelamatkan diriku dari ketidakpastian menjadi bangsa apa dan bertanah air mana* (*Keberangkatan*, 37).

25 The strange variety of meats in the local diet is linked to the area being Christian, which does not have the same regulations about diet as does Islam or Hinduism. Legislation passed in 2023 has changed this somewhat by limiting the types of meat and slaughter methods used.

After walking around the tourist area and stopping at a cafe to eat some roti bakar (sweet toast) and to drink kopi (coffee) we headed up to Bukit Kasih, sometimes called "The Hill of Love." Once there we bought corn that was steamed from the heat of the volcano and stopped for a dip in a hot spring. After many weeks of cold baths at my host family's house, this was an amazing experience. The main attraction of Bukit Kasih are five buildings of religious worship built right next to each other. There is a mosque, a Hindu temple, a Buddhist shrine, and two Christian churches (one Catholic and one Protestant). Even though Java is the cultural center of Indonesia, Bukit Kasih demonstrates another important aspiration of modern Indonesian identity—one of tolerance and acceptance. It is an icon of how Northern Sulawesi has exemplified a certain kind of Indonesian progress.[26]

At first, I thought Manado was going to be a hopeless place to study. It was far away from the Javanese and Balinese performing arts and culture I had heard about and wanted to explore. But I discovered alternatives, and even as I now often center my work in Bali and Java, I am always looking beyond.

While Elisa struggles with her identity, which includes her religion—she made a point of not mentioning her Catholicism to Sukoharjito (who is of course Muslim)— she has friends who rectify this religious conflict by looking beyond Java. Elisa's friend from childhood, Kumayas, tells her, "This Friday I leave for Manado. I'm getting married." Elisa is delighted for her friend, but also surprised, "I thought you wanted to marry a Javanese girl?" (57–58).[27] Kumayas confirms that was true, until he met his fiancé back when visiting his hometown. He realized that there were too many differences between himself and a Javanese, "With a girl from my village there are no such difficulties," the customs, traditions, and

26 This description captures well what I mean: "But if you happen to go to North Sulawesi, all the pessimism seems rather far-fetched. At the provincial airport the terminal is brand new and the dive tourists keep coming for the nearby Bunaken reefs. The city of Manado makes a more prosperous impression than in the past and boasts a complete new seafront on reclaimed land, with lavish shopping centres and entertainment venues. Loudspeakers on the steeples of numerous churches broadcast sugary evangelical music to match the amplified calls to prayer from the city's many mosques. Well-maintained roads lead up to the mountains and across the tranquil plateau of Minahasa. And this in a mixed but predominantly Christian area not so far from three other Christian enclaves where things have gone badly wrong in recent years" (Henley et al. 2007, 305).

27 *Jum'at ini aku berangkat ke Manado, Elisa. Mau Kawin*; *Kukira dulu kau ingin kawin dengan gadis Jawa* (*Keberangkatan*, 69–70).

even the jokes were the same (59).[28] Modern ideals of tolerance and friendship between different ethnicities and religions, like Bukit Kasih represents, might be the goal, but reality was, and is, often different. Elisa would struggle to overcome this terrain.

Departures is the only book in my study where marriage is a central topic and concern. I believe this is no accident. Dini composed the novel during the 1970s, a period when marriage occupied a central place in the public consciousness following the landmark marriage law of 1974. This law contained reforms to practices such as arranged marriage, child marriage, and polygyny (these issues were the focus of Indonesian women's groups) and attempted to control high population growth rates.[29] Love marriages became more popular, especially as romantic love appeared often in popular literature and entertainment. Nisa argues that for women, "love marriage serves as a way in which they can exercise their individual autonomy as modern women" (2016, 8). The discussions and views about marriage in the novel give insight into how Dini constructs Elisa's identity to represent these "modern" ideals.

Perhaps because Dini herself had such a rocky marriage, she expresses different views of marriage through Elisa. At first, Elisa's feelings towards love and marriage are somewhat ambivalent. Elisa has several male friends that came in and out in her life; they would go out with friends or to movies. Elisa admits that at first she longed for marriage and was ready to say "yes" as soon as someone offered his hand, but not for love; rather, marriage offered a means to escape her family and would give her independent social status. Elisa did not have any strong feelings about her many male friends, "they had their good points and bad points, but none of them were so perfect" (*Departures*, 22).[30] Finally, she achieves freedom from her family on her own with her job at the airline, but Elisa still has this feeling that she would like to or should get married.

Elisa's hesitation turns to certainty when she meets a Javanese man

28 *Dengan gadis sekampung, tidak ada kesukaran. sama-sama kebiasaan, sama-sama adat. Kalau bersenda atau bergurau, segara saling dapat mengerti* (*Keberangkatan* 71–72).

29 The Dutch in Indonesia also followed these practices of early marriage and polygyny. For more, see Nisa 2016.

30 *Pemuda-pemuda lain sama saja. Ada baiknya, ada jeleknya. Tak ada yang memiliki kesempurnaan yang bisa kuterima seluruhnya* (*Departures,* 32).

names Sukoharjito. Elisa proclaims, "My meeting with Sukoharijito was to determine the path my life was to take from that moment on" (*Departures,* 24–25).[31] Before Elisa knows it, she would find herself mumbling "Elisa Sukoharjito"[32] and found "it had a finer ring" than any of the other combinations of her name with potential male suitors (*Departures*, 26).[33] This love story in *Departures* serves to challenge established structures of identity, as Elisa navigates and transcends social hierarchies, actively "performing" her identity. Her romance with Sukoharjito is deeply intertwined with her aspiration to embody "Javanese" identity, often regarded as the quintessential representation of Indonesian culture. Gaining acceptance from Sukoharjito and his family would confirm her acceptance into Indonesia as a true home. Elisa declares to her friends, "I want to marry a Javanese" (38).[34] Even when her close friend Rudi, another Eurasian, proposes, she turns him down. He does not represent the identity and future she desires.

The turning point in the relationship happens when Sukoharjito invites Elisa to come home with him to Solo to visit his family for Lebaran.[35] Elisa has never been to Solo, sometimes called Surakarta, an especially culturally significant city in Indonesia. Geography reinforces identity; Solo, together with Yogyakarta, are considered centers of Javanese identity.[36] Dini makes the point that Elisa has never been to

31 *Dan pertemuanku dengan Sukoharjito menjadi pentemuan jalan hidupku selanjutnya* (*Keberangkatan,* 34).

32 Javanese names are often singular and so therefore the first and last name are the same. Therefore, in accordance with Dutch custom, Elisa would take Sukoharjito's only name as her family name.)

33 *Nama Sukoharjito muncul terpisah dari lain-lainnya* (*Keberangkatan,* 35).

34 *Tapi aku ingin kawin dengan orang Jawa* (*Keberangkatan*, 48).

35 Lebaran, also known as Eid al-Fitr, is a significant religious holiday celebrated by Muslims worldwide. It marks the end of Ramadan, the holy month of fasting. The term Lebaran is derived from the Indonesian and Malay languages, meaning "to celebrate" or "to forgive." During Lebaran, families gather to perform prayers, share festive meals, and exchange gifts. It is a time for forgiveness, charity, and community bonding. In many cultures, it is also customary to visit relatives, seek forgiveness from one another, and give zakat (charity) to those in need. In Indonesia, almost everyone travels home for Lebaran. Big cities like Jakarta become eerily empty.

36 Solo, or Surakarta, is historically significant to Indonesian identity as it was the seat of the Mataram Kingdom and later the Kingdom of Surakarta, which played a crucial role in the development of Javanese culture and politics. The city is home to important royal palaces and traditional arts, embodying the rich heritage that influences Indonesia's national identity. Additionally, Solo's historical events, such as its role in the struggle for independence, contribute to its status as a symbol of

Solo, because "Elisa only knows cities with airports" (42).[37] Solo, Sukoharjito's home city, emphasizes the "no-whereness" of Elisa's identity and place in Indonesian modernity because it is not possible to fly there, it has no airport.

The car journey to Solo foreshadows the disastrous fate of the relationship, and with it, Elisa's hope for a Javanese identity. It is not an easy path, and identity, like modernity, is full of contradictions. Sukoharjito drove them there with his own car, and on the second day they toured the city of Semerang:

> The following day we toured the city for a while and saw the canal that was used as a mooring for small boats. We walked as far as the lighthouse on the point. Everywhere it was filthy, as if an area of the harbor was used as the town's own rubbish dump. From there, along roads full of potholes and slippery footpaths, we arrived at the area of Pecinan, where we explored a Chinese temple and ate at a Chinese food stall. The food was delicious, but the view was of a dirt alley, and the river smelled foul, and beggars never stopped staring at us with empty eyes. It took away my appetite (85).[38]

These descriptions mix beauty with ugliness to suggest that tradition and the old ways are rotting; they are off in the distance and spoil the present. But overall, the trip was pleasant and his family was nice to her. Elisa observes, "I surrendered myself to the flow of time" (86).[39] This image of time as a surrender collapses the contradictions of tradition and modernity even as it reminds us how tradition stifles and modernity pollutes. The pollution and heaviness of the journey and house are even more significant when contrasted with Elisa's experience traveling to and meeting Talib, where the trip was winding yet successful.

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cultural pride and resilience in Indonesia.

37 *Elisa sih hanya kota-kota yang punya lapangan terbang saja yang dia kenel* (*Keberangkatan*, 52).

38 *Keesokan harinya, kami keliling kota sebentar, melihat kana yang dipergunakan sebagai pelabuhan perahu-perahu kecil. Berjalan hingga ke ujang mercu. Semuanya kotor. Seolah-olah bagian pelubahan itu menjadi tempat buangan sampah dari seluruh penduduk kota. Dari sana, melalui jalan-jalan yang hilangan aspal dan kelicinan trotoar, dengan berdesakan kami sampai ke daerah Pecinan. Melihat kelenteng sebentar, lalu makan di salah satu warung Cina. Makanannya lezat. Tetapi pemandangan jalanan yang kering, bau kali, yang amis, kere-kere yang tidak berhentinya memandang dengan mata kosong, semua itu membikinkau tidak bernapsu* (*Keberangkatan*, 97–98).

39 *Aku mengikuti aliran waktu tampa memiliki kehendak sendiri* (*Keberangkatan*, 98).

After the trip, Elisa's relationship with Sukoharjito continues to develop, but does not progress. They continue to see each other, but he is reluctant to make a commitment of any kind. Sukoharjito also proves unreliable, promising to go out, but then often canceling at the last minute. "I tried to let it all go and not get too upset if he couldn't come or take me out when I needed him. My life flowed along like the sea, never resting, never changing" (117). Sukoharjito asks Elisa what she wants for her birthday, and trying to hint about her desires, she asks for a ring. But this is not the proposal she had wished for, he takes her to a goldsmith and has her order a ring. But in the inside of the band is engraved his name, "Sukoharjito," so she remains hopeful.

Later, Elisa attends a party to celebrate a friend's recent marriage; she did not want to go but her friend Lansih insisted. An American journalist, Gail, who Elisa met at another outing was there. He asks her to dance, but she suggests they join the game of charades instead. She is having a great time when Lansih tells her to go meet with their friend Marjono who has something important to tell her away from the others. From Marjono, Elisa is shocked to learn that Sukoharjito is getting married to the niece of the president's adjutant in about a month's time.[40] Sukoharjito had been going out with the niece for six months, and almost everyone who worked at the palace knew it. Elisa is overcome with grief and feels her life is falling apart.

Unlike many of the works by Indonesian women authors, like those included in this book, where characters enact their freedom from society's rules through their sexual freedom, Elsa *does not* act out in a sexually promiscuous way. Rather, Elisa asserts her agency through her refusal of sex. She learns that Sukoharjito is marrying this other girl so quickly because it is likely she is pregnant. Elisa, on the other hand, never did more than kiss Sukoharjito. The novel emphasizes Elisa's chastity as surprising; Elisa's friends assumed they had slept together, because "rumors go around about how free and easy Eurasian girls are. Too free" (*Departures,* 128).[41] But Elisa insists, "I'm not like the other Eurasian girls"

40 An adjutant is a military appointment who helps a commanding officer, in this case the president, with administrative tasks.

41 *Desas-desus yang sering terdengar mengatakan bahwa anak-anak gadis Indo amat bebas pergaulannya. Terlalu bebas* (*Keberangkatan,* 144).

(*Departures*, 129).[42] Indo women were considered sexually available and promiscuous. Hewett describes that this stereotype probably developed before the nineteenth century as many Eurasian women felt pressure to demonstrate their "white status" through their relationships with European men. Many of these interactions, however, originated or persisted outside of marriage (2016, 31).

For women, sexuality has been equated with various configurations of freedom and agency in Indonesia. Additionally, in Indonesia, "the term 'feminist' was identified with sexual boldness, and social assertiveness defined as alien, foreign, and contradictory to Indonesian women's inherent, authentic nature" (Hatley 2002, 133). Elisa defies stereotype and demonstrates agency through her refusal of Sukoharjito. She does not need a man. Her path though is not easy and eventually leads back to the liminal space of the airport; Elisa only finds freedom by leaving.

Crashing

Despite her broken heart, life continues around Elisa. Talib is recovering from his illness, and other couples are happy, but "other people's happiness was sometimes painful to witness" (*Departures*, 136).[43] The difficulty of her emotional state is captured in the description of her journey to now visit Talib after he is discharged from the hospital, "I'd been able to get a direct minibus or change just once. Now I had to go to Kebayoran Baru, first by trishaw to Banteng Square, and then take a bus going to Rajasa Street or Block Q. Sometimes I spend ages waiting for a bus, wasting a lot of my time" (*Departures*, 137).[44] To counter Elisa's sad emotional state, Lansih tries to assure Elisa that life will continue, and she will feel happy again.

Elisa does finally agree to go out again with Gail the American, with whom she had fun at the party. He offers to drive her on his scooter to visit Talib. This moment thrusts Elisa into the discomfort of something new:

42 *Aku tidak seperti anak-anak Indo lainnya* (*Keberangkatan*, 144).

43 *Kebahagiaan orang lain kadang-kadang amat kejam untuk dilihat* (*Keberangkatan*, 153).

44 *Aku biasa mendapat oplet langsung atau berganti sekali. Sekerang, untuk pergi sampai Kebayoran Baru, aku harus naik becak ke Lapangan Banteng lalu, mencari bis yang memuju Jalan Rajasa di Blok Q. Kadang-kadang lama menunggu bis. Waktu yang tidak banyak habis di jalan* (*Keberangkatan*, 154).

> The scooter zoomed through the cool evening air, slipping in and out of the bustling traffic of the capital. This was my first ride on a scooter. I sat there uneasily, worried I might lose a shoe under the wheels of the vehicle behind us. I wasn't sure how to best hold on... Foreigners on the road were always more visible (*Departures*, 141–42).[45]

Expressed within her discomfort on the scooter, Elisa continues to negotiate feelings of not belonging and discomfort within Indonesia; she finally decides that her only choice is to leave. She goes to the embassy and requests a visa. Elisa's departure to the Netherlands is immanent, but she hesitates to tell anyone.

Before Elisa can leave however, a disaster happens. One day, quite unusually, she sleeps in and almost misses the van to take her to work. At the airport Elisa learns the flight she is assigned carried a dead body from Bandung the day before, making her feel uneasy. The captain and other steward assigned to her aircraft also slept in, adding to the sense of foreboding. Finally, the plane takes off into a sheet of rain, and "it felt like we were pushing against a huge concentration of water from the heavens" (*Departures*, 153).[46] They have engine problems and attempt to return to the airport. The engine, however, continues to struggle, and the airplane plummets out of the sky towards the ground—"I felt myself hurled against something hard. Then everything turned black and fell silent" (*Departures*, 155).[47]

Eventually the feeling of cold rain against her skin causes her to regain consciousness. Slowly Elisa realizes that they landed in a swamp and she is lucky to be alive:

> I had just escaped death, I was safe. There I was, sprawled on top of the wrecked aircraft with its broken tail, twisted wings and half-destroyed nose... Now no matter what hit me, I was ready for anything. I didn't care. I was invulnerable. I felt like someone with supernatural powers (*Departures*, 157).[48]

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45 *Sekuter berjalan mengarungi udara petang yang sejuk, menyelinap di antara becak dari kendaraan yang berjejalan memenuhi dan menggaduhi ibu kota. Baru kali itulah aku menggonceng sekuter. Dudukku tidak lena. Setiap saat aku khawatir kalau-kalau salah satu kelomku tertanggal dan jatuh menghilang di bawah roda-roda kendaraan yang ada di belakang kami. Aku juga tidak tahu bagaimana cara terbaik buat berpegang... Orang asing di jalanan selalu lebih kelihatan daripada lainnya* (*Keberangkatan*, 159).

46 *Kurasakan kami seperti maju melawan tumpahan air dari angkasa* (*Keberangkatan*, 172).

47 *Kurasa badanku terangkat, terbentur pada sesuatu yang keras. Lalu semua menjadi hitam gelap. Semua menjadi diam dan lengang* (*Keberangkatan*, 174).

48 *Aku baru terlepas dari bahaya maut. Aku selamat. Terkapar di atas bangkai kapal terbang*

Finally, they are rescued and taken to a hospital; everyone survived except the pilot, who was supposed to get married in a few months. Elisa spends Christmas Eve in the hospital:

> I slept only in snatches, often woken by unconscious, turbulent emotions, then by dreams I was arriving in a foreign airport, being met and taken to a hostel, sterile and modern but at the same time silent and frightening. A women in a uniform with a whip in her hand was teaching me to use a stenography machine and an adding machine full of infinitely long numbers... These two images—the present and the future—were trying to overwhelm me (*Departures*, 160).[49]

Elisa's dreams suggest the liminal space between the past and future, a kind of tradition and modernity, within which her identity must emerge. Elisa decides on a path that resists an easy happy ending.

My most recent trip to Indonesia was during October 2024. I planned to attend the Ubud Readers and Writers Festival after working with my wayang teacher to learn a new puppet story. I hadn't been to the island since 2018, and was shocked by how much had changed. Not only did Ubud, often considered the heart of Balinese performing arts, now have Starbucks and the traditional art market across the street from the palace, or puri, was completely rebuilt, but the transportation infrastructure had completely changed.

The airport in Denpasar, the I Gusti Ngurah Rai International Airport, is one of the busiest in Indonesia. I remember the airport as crowded, old, and showing the wear of many years of use. Then around 2014 major renovations began to change things. The international terminal and then the domestic terminal were expanded and rebuilt. Now it is spacious and bright with an overwhelming number of international restaurants and shops. On June 1, 2023, the airport hit a significant milestone — it was the first airport in Indonesia to accommodate an Airbus A380-800, for a daily flight from Dubai. One of the largest airplanes

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yang patah ekornya, bengkok sayapnya dan setengah hancur hidungnya... Sekerang semua boleh menimpaku. Kita segalnya dapat terjadi padaku. Aku tidak khawatir. Karena aku kebal. Aku merasa diriku seperti sesorang yang sakti (*Keberangkatan*, 176).

49 *Tidus sekilas-sekilas, aku sering dibangunkan oleh goncangan rasa bawah sedar yang mencemaskan, kemudian berganti dengan mimpi tigaku disebuah lapangan udara asing, dijemput dan dikumpulkan dalam sebuah asrama yang bersih, moderen tapi sepi dan memakutkan. Seorang wanita berpakaian seragam dengan sebuah pecut di tangannya mengajarku menggunakan mesin tulis steno, mesin hitung dengan jumlah-jumlah angka yang panjang tidak habis-habisnya... Demikian kedua bayangan antara sekerang dan masa datang itu bergulat hendak memenangkanku* (*Keberangkatan*, 179).

in the world, it needs a runway of 2,900 miles to take off.

The road from the airport to Ubud completely changed as well. I had always enjoyed seeing so many small warung (food stalls) and shops along the busy, windy road. It might take two hours, but there was plenty to see. Now there is an expansive toll road that even goes out into the ocean to miss the busiest traffic. With these new roads the trip only took 45 minutes or so, and more large roads are planned to continue to enhance connections around the island. There are controversies about how these changes and increased numbers of tourism will impact the island's unique eco-system and culture, but the "progress" continues. These make travel easier but also separate the traveler from the context—it could be an airport anywhere, it could be a road anywhere.

Elisa sought freedom by staying behind to work at the airport, but she struggles to find a place within Indonesian modernity. Dini illustrates the contradictions Elisa faces within imperfections. During one of their first dates, Sukoharjito remarks he hears how Garuda airplanes keep having technical problems. Elisa bristles because she knows how hard the pilots and other staff work to keep the airline running. She admits though that the planes are old and need replacing, "They say they were already damaged goods when they bought them from KLM" (49). And then at the end, one of the planes crashes killing the brave pilot. Dini reveals that modernity, as a place for identity, cannot be trusted.

Elisa disappoints her friends, Talib, and Gail when she finally reveals that she is leaving. The night before her departure, Elisa goes back to the place of her first date with Sukoharjito, but this time with Gail. There she has the courage to tell him about the disappointments in her past, but Dini frames the conversation as more than personal. Elisa explains how for her, "and for Indonesian girls in general, those close relationships determined the sole purpose of our lives: to marry and establish a family" (*Departures*, 167).[50] She continues by explaining that "feelings of women were often ignored and disregarded by men in this country" (*Departures*, 167).[51] Close to the end of the book, Dini has Elisa draw attention to the impossible situation of women in Indonesia. Elisa's view

50 *Dan bagi gasis-gadis Indonesia umumnya, pergaulan akrab itulah yang menentukan tujuan seluruh hidup, berupa perkawinan dan pembinaan sebuah keluarga* (*Keberangkatan*, 187).

51 *Perasaan-perasaan wanita yang seringkali diabaikan serta dimasabodohkan oleh pihak pria di negeri ini* (*Keberangkatan*, 187).

as expressed to Gail echoes the societal and governmental expectations that women follow what was perceived as their *kodrat*—their nature and duty. The only solution for Elisa, and maybe for Indonesian women generally, is to seek life elsewhere.

The novel ends with the same grey and drizzle of the opening; Elisa looks out the window as the plane flies through the sky. The future and the past disappear, and the next destination remains uncertain. Elisa trespasses by never landing, by never settling for either side of the dichotomy of tradition/modernity. The powerful move for Elisa is not in where she is going, because for Dini trespassing is departing. The book ends with Elisa describing, "feeling melancholy but calm, I left my land and my city behind" (*Departures*, 170).[52]

52 *Dengan hati rawan tetapi terang, tanah dan kotaku kutinggalkan* (*Keberangkatn*, 190).

6. Going *Home*

In the chapter before this one, I focused on the novel *Keberangkatan* or *Departures* by Nh. Dini. In Dini's book, home never becomes something that can be fully attained. Rather, for Elisa, the main character in *Departures*, the future remains uncertain. She was unable to acquire or perform the role of "good wife and mother," and Javanese identity and culture eluded her. Finally, Elisa runs away to the Netherlands to join her family in seeking asylum there. Even though the Netherlands is supposedly home, Elisa will be living in limbo, like so many other Indos (people with mixed Indonesian and European descent) who were pushed out of Indonesia after independence. The only way Elisa can be true to herself is to remain home-less. I view the novel *Pulang* (*Home*) by Leila S. Chudori, as a kind of response to the dilemma that Elisa faces in *Departures*.

The story in *Pulang*[1] spans multiple generations and shifts narrators, but at the center is the story of Lintang, who was born in Paris to an Indonesian exile and a French mother. Like Elisa, Lintang struggles to reconcile her mixed heritage. Her father, Dimas, fled Indonesia to end up in Paris during the transition from Sukarno's government to Suharto's New Order. Dimas escaped the violent killing and imprisonment of thousands but also lost his ability to ever return home. Lintang only knows Indonesia through food and the puppet stories her father and his friends told her. She seeks to know more about her dual identity and travels to Indonesia to make a documentary for a school project about the politics that made her father an exile.

1 Throughout this book I often primarily use the English names of the works I am examining. I do this to make it easier for my reader, who may not speak Indonesian. For this chapter I use *Pulang* instead of *Home* because the idea of "home" is so prevalent in the novel and my analysis. I want it to be clear when I am referring to the novel.

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Pulang is the first novel by Leila S. Chudori and it combines her love of research and history within a character-driven story. Chudori began writing short fiction when she was twelve and later studied in Canada to be a journalist. The events in *Pulang* are bookended by two of the most tumultuous periods in Indonesian history. The first is the transition from Sukarno's government to Suharto's New Order, that resulted in the violent killing and imprisonment or exile of thousands. This is contrasted with the demonstrations in 1998 in response to the Asian financial crisis that resulted in the overthrow of Suharto and brought Indonesia into the democratic period that began with *Reformasi.* Throughout, Chudori plays with how time and history overlap within the lives of the characters. The novel has won numerous awards, including 2012 Khatulistiwa Literary Award, Indonesia's most prestigious literary prize and has been translated into several languages.

Pulang received exposure because it was one of several literary and other works focusing on the "remembering 1965" that were released "in a flurry of creative output" (Allen 2014). For Chudori, however, engaging with the events of 1998 were just as important as 1965 when she began researching for this novel. In an article she wrote for *Inside Indonesia* about history and the novel, she explains:

> *Itulah sebabnya tahun 1998 bagi saya pribadi menjadi titik penting karena saya menganggap inilah tahun untuk menemukan diri kami; membuat sebuah definisi ulang tentang idetitas kami; mencari tahu tentang masa lalu negeri ini untuk kemudian kami putuskan apa yang ingin kami lakukan agar peristiwa brutal seperti pembunuhan masal itu tak terulang lagi. Jika sejak tahun 1998 terdengar suara mereka secara bergiliran direkam kembali secara lirih atau lantang melalui berbagai karya fiksi, teater, tari, film atau jurnalistik, menurut saya adalah sesuatu yang wajar* (2016).

> 1998 is an important year for me personally, because this is the year that we [Indonesians] found ourselves; to define ourselves; to search for knowledge about the country's past and what we want to do to make sure that similar brutal events never happen again. Since 1998 our voices will be heard, whether softly or loudly, in fictional works such as theatre, dance, and film, or journalism. I think this is only wise (my translation).

Chudori is not only interested in teaching contemporary Indonesian and global audiences about the nation's history, but rather she sees history

as central to questions of identity. In this chapter, I analyze how Lintang trespasses beyond conventional frameworks of national and familial histories to argue that *Pulang* conceptualizes time and place as active agents to facilitate an emancipatory relationship with "home."

In the novel, truth is not stable, but rather something that can be made; multiple truths emerge as experienced through the senses and shifting points-of-view. Performance studies scholar Shannon Jackson describes how a written text, like *Pulang*, might disorient the reader: "Whether playing with tense, pronoun or physical and verbal discontinuity, the performer is often in several places at once" (Jackson 2009, 11). If historical truth, and the truth of identity are subject to interpretation and perception, might then the truth of women's nature and role in the world also be questioned? Chudori does not mention *kodrat*[2] by name, but the events of the novel, especially the end, challenge gender identity as fixed and determined. There is no essential nature or path, only choices that enable trespassing. Likewise, as the novel wanders between characters, memories, and the present. I find myself needing to examine the story from many angles because different moments in the novel reveal different aspects of identity through different orientations of home. Trespassing, as it relates to the novel, exists through these different orientations.

Orienting Towards Home

Pulang, translated into *Home* for the English title of the novel, is an Indonesian word that means to "go home," or "return." In English, home is a place, a noun; while *pulang* is an action, a verb, something that is always becoming. In this way *pulang* emphasizes the movement between two places—between home and not/home. In 2016, Chudori felt Indonesia was at a similar crossroads about its identity. Was Indonesia going to become a conservative Islamic state that limited free-speech and oppressed women and members of the LGBTQ community? In *Home*, history offers a necessary backdrop, but the central questions

2 *Kodrat* is an Indonesian term that refers to the inherent nature or essential characteristics of a person or thing, often linked to their destiny or natural order. In Indonesian society, it has been used to define traditional roles and expectations for women as dutiful housewives and caring mothers.

are about identity and place. Through these different meaning of *pulang*, I focus on both place and time as they relate to and create an alternative idea of home and identity for Indonesian women through the character of Lintang.

"Home" is not only the name of the novel, but a major, and complicated, theme. Lintang grapples with different ideas of home as part of her father's legacy. In literature, home can be a dwelling that is shared with a family or a conceptual psychological space, it might be a destination, a shelter, an intimate private space that contrasts with the public, it could be a symbol of self, nation, or culture.[3]

Home offers a framework for understanding Lintang's in-between identity, because "home" has different implications for women. Home in literature functions differently as a symbol depending on the gender of the character. "Male characters are frequently portrayed as the household providers and guardians," while "female characters are frequently portrayed as the nurturers and caretakers of the household" (Saha and Chakraborty 2023, 119–20). This stereotype of women as caretakers of the household is especially apt for Indonesia. After Suharto came into power in 1967, several significant policies were passed concerning the position of women within Indonesian society. First was the creation of family planning policies to limit family size, which reinforced traditional gender roles by promoting the image of women primarily as mothers. The 1974 marriage law further differentiated roles of men and women within the family; it codified the idea that the husband is the head of the household, and the wife is responsible for managing domestic affairs. Julia Suryakusuma coined this phenomenon as "State Ibuism" (Ibu means mother) and these policies created a legal foundation for the idea that women should follow their *kodrat* ("nature") as good wives and mothers. These various policies and ideas, even today, establish women's place as within the home and domestic sphere (Suryakusuma, 2012).

For the characters in the novel, home has many meanings that resonate with how feminist performance scholar Sara Ahmed describes home:

3 For an excellent overview of this see "Exploring the Notion of 'Home' in Literature" by Ramita Saha and Sayan Chakraborty (2023).

> Loving one's home is not about being fixed into a place, but rather it is about becoming part of a space where one has expanded one's body, saturating the space with bodily matter: home as *overflowing* and *flowing over*. Of course, sometimes we do not feel at home; you might feel discomfort and alienation in a space that is still overflowing with memories. Or you might feel homesick; estranged from you present location and long for a space that you once inhabited as home. Or you might not feel at home, and you dance with joy at the anonymity of bare walls, untouched by the faces of loved ones that throw the body into another time and place (Ahmed 2020, 11).

For Lintang, Indonesia is both *overflowin*g and *flowing over* with the memories and dreams of her childhood. Home in the novel resonates with Ahmed's terms of alienation, estrangement, and joy. I argue that ideas of home activate trespassing as away from, and back again, to Indonesia; "it throws her body into another time and place" bursting with possibility (Ahmed 2020, 11).

How can something both be home and not be home? The term "unhomely," used by cultural theorist Homi Bhabba, resonates with the dual nature I see contained within *pulang*. Bhabba writes, "in the stirrings of the unhomely, another world becomes visible [...] The unhomely is the shock of recognition of the world-in-the-home, the home-in-the-world" (Bhabba 1992, 141). Bhabba then describes the various qualities within literary texts that write the home as unhomely, concluding that home is a place that can turn strange but remains an essential possession. I will explore how *pulang* becomes unhomely be containing many possibilities of time and space, place and movement for Lintang.

I borrow Bhabba's use of "unhomely" to not only foreground how the home often served as a site of women's oppression, but to also interrogate the relationship of trespassing to home. Does leaving one home automatically suggest finding or making a home in another place? How might home function as a global construct or way of being? Anthropologist Michael Jackson, in his search for a global definition of home, writes about home not as a place, but rather a sense of belonging. He asserts, "This metaphorical connection between existence and the earth may be universal. All over the world, people objectify their sense of being and belonging in images of place" (1995, 19). Through relationships and travel, Lintang seeks to orient herself to belong in a place.

Orientation contains several meanings, and each offers a way to understand how Lintang navigates the world. One definition of orientation describes it is a process of getting information to understand a thing, job, or experience. Orientation also means direction; students orient themselves towards the chalk board at the front of the classroom. Additionally, orientation refers to a prolonged interest or (even sexual) identity. Sara Ahmed connects orientation as information with orientation as identity through focusing on how orientation gives direction:

> how it is that we come to find our way in a world that acquires new shapes, depending on which way we turn. If we know where we are when we turn this way or that way, then we are orientated. We have our bearings. We know what to do to get to this place or that place. To be orientated is also to be turned toward certain objects, those that help us find our way. [...] They gather on the ground, and they create a ground upon which we can gather (Ahmed 2020, 1).

Ahmed thus privileges bodily experience as how people orient themselves in the world and in relation to other peoples and things. Lintang travels from France to Indonesia to discover who she is, but she stuck in "the lived experience of facing at least two directions: toward a home that has been lost, and to a place that is not yet home" (Ahmed 2020, 10). From this, I see trespassing as a process of orientation for navigating interior/exterior and home/word realms as Lintang seeks her identity.

Phenomenology posits that the world can be known through the senses; however, that knowing is always limited (one person can never see all sides of the whole at once). Through sensual descriptions, the novel emerges as an experience between author, characters, and reader. Like most of the other work in this book, I combine performance studies with literary analysis—because, "both performance and phenomenology engage with experience, perception, and with making sense as processes that are embodied, situated, and relational" (Bleeker et al. 2015, 1).Throughout the novel reader engages in a world that is both knowable and mysterious, a process of orientation.

Critics describe *Pulang* as a poetic ode to the poor fate of the exile and this interpretation positions Dimas, Lintang's father, as the central character. This means, however, that major plot points are either

ignored, or dismissed as confusing. For example, Pamela Allen describes Lintang's love affair with the character Segara Alam as "an unnecessary addition to the plot" (2018, 61), even though these events are central to the third part of the book. Literary critic Henri Chambert-Loir further demonstrates the confusion that results if Dimas is the central character in the novel:

> Thus, in reality, the dream of going home transpired to be an illusion: the exiles had no place left in their own country; they chose to stay in their host countries rather than to accept an extremely uncomfortable situation in their country of origin. This ending is unacceptable in the logic of the novel, which remains oriented towards a homecoming until the end. The author therefore has chosen to keep the dream intact (the exiles do not visit Indonesia, the confrontation does not take place; behind the closed border of the country they still have, intact, an ideal place) and to make the going home to be performed by the second generation (2018, 91).

In the novel, Dimas continues to try to go home: he applies for a visa every year, and every year he is turned down. It is only after he dies that he receives his wish to be buried in Indonesia. Dimas lacks orientation because he longs for a place, Indonesia, where he can never return.[4]

I orient my analysis on Dimas's daughter Lintang as the primary character. I believe, through the meaning of Lintang's name, that Chudori gives the reader essential directions on how to approach the complex web of characters and events within the novel.[5] The name Lintang Utara,

4 I think part of this misreading comes from the fact that Chudori, as an author, cares deeply about teaching history through her work. To authentically portray Dimas and his friends she spent time in Paris learning about the Indonesian exile community there. The characters of Dimas, Nugroho Dewantoro, Tjai Sin Soe, and Mohammand Risjaf were based on the lives of Oemar Said, Budiman Sudharsono, Sobron Aidit, and Kusni Sulanf, who were Indonesian expats living in France. Henri Chambert-Loir (2018) gives a detailed criticism of how he thinks Chudori changed the facts of their lives, but Chudori herself asserts she is writing fiction and not a history. Indeed, Chambert-Loir is susceptible to similar generalizing that tends to erase the differences of a diverse community and discounts the thoughtful ways these exiles might strategically write their relationship to Indonesia. It is outside the scope of this book to engage in a prolonged disagreement with many of the things Chambert-Loir complains about, but let me go on record saying that I deeply disagree with his reading of Chudori's work—as my analysis in this chapter will deftly demonstrate.

5 A blog in January 2025, by a young literary critic named Bila on the website *Medium*, describes how she initially did not like the novel. She was unable to connect with Dimas as the main character. But Bila changed her mind when she encountered

means "North Star," and the figure of Polaris contains many different meanings and functions. One is that throughout maritime history the north star has guided sailors to their destinations. Also, more recently the term "North Star" has been connected to finding one's true identity. For example, life coach Martha Beck describes the North Star as a person's essential self, the part of a person that contains their innermost desires and identity. She contrasts this with a person's social self, the part that is created by culture and society (3–5). By selecting this name for his daughter, Lintang becomes Dimas's guide, his "north star," but Lintang will also have to discover her essential self as she navigates various social situations.

Furthermore, the North Star is the brightest star and appears fixed in the center of the sky; all other stars seem to rotate around it. Likewise, Lintang resides at the center of the story and the other characters move around her. Chudori achieves this by not only moving between several characters as the focus, but by shifting the point of view as well. Sometimes the story focuses on a character and is told in the third-person and sometimes in first-person, from the point of view of the character. This breaks a rather steady rule in the writing of fiction, that the narrator's position should be "clear and stable" (Friedman 1955, 1165). Additionally, the reader's orientation regarding the characters and events fluctuates, sometimes close and sometimes far removed. The different memories, actions, and hopes for the future all are part of the I-N-D-O-N-E-S-I-A by which Lintang orients herself.

Aerial Identity

Airplanes are technologies of place, time, and identity and were considered symbols of the future, of the modern world. Stories and

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Lintang, who she describes as "smart and lovely. She is also broken, in a way, and it makes her exceptional." For Bila, Lintang's journey made her confront her own conflicted feelings about Indonesia and identify: "why would I want to keep moving away but at the same time I would love to fight for it?" (See https://medium.com/@sabilalb/pulang-by-leila-s-chudori-an-afterthought-62bc7551cde0). I believe this tendency to read Dimas as the main characters reveals how women are often excluded from the movement of history and does not reflect the intention of Chudori. (Even as Chudori takes advantage of this incorrect reading that has made the novel "important.")

imagery of airplanes or flying reveal how Lintang navigates her identity in a way that resonates with how historian Robert Hemming designates the airplane as a thing of hope that enabled discovery and knowledge. He describes how through global travel, one could conquer the unknown, and "de-exoticize distant colonial lands" (2015, 284). Airplanes create the opportunity to travel to Indonesia, so that Lintang might know her history, and through that knowledge she can know herself. But airplanes and aviation also emerge to complicate Lintang's identity and relation to the modern world.

Imagery of flying and the sky establish moments where Lintang connects her identity to stories. Lintang describes how when she was a child in Paris they would go in the spring to watch movies outside. Before the show, her father would tell her stories from within shadow puppetry, or *wayang*, as a way for her to know Indonesia. Lintang describes how lying on the grass, they "would let our imaginations fly. I can see our hands raised upward, our grasping fingers trying to clutch the sky... "(*Home*, 191).[6] Lintang's identity is in crisis because she inhabits an in-between space of uncertainty. Her struggle is reflected in how Laurence Goldstein, in his review of flying and modern literature, writes "the flying machine has always been the object of double-vision" (1986, 12). On one hand, it represents mythic possibility and hope; humans could fly like birds. On the other hand, it is a symbol of scientific advancement capable of great destruction. Like Lintang, the flying machine contained two identities, at odds, within one entity. These identities emerge when, as they lay in the grass, Lintang told her father her favorite characters from *wayang*[7] were Srikandi from the *Mahabharata* and Candra Kirana from *Panji Semirang*:

> "Why Srikandi?" he asked.
> "It's like in the story, she's searching for the right body for herself."
> "And what about Panji Semirang?"
> "He is looking for his identity." (*Home*, 191).[8]

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6 *Aku ingat bagaimana tangan kami mencoba meraih langit* (*Pulang*, 186).

7 *Wayang*, or *wayang kulit*, in Indonesia often tells stories from the *Mahabharata* or *Ramayana*. These puppet plays are one of Indonesia's oldest and most important art forms. The stories represent Indonesian identity and values. For more, see Sears 1996.

8 "*Kenapa Srikandi?*"
"*Aku merasa dia bergerak mencari raga yang tepat*."
"*Kanapa Panji Semirang*?"

The novel explains that Lintang selects Srikandi and Candra Kirana because they are characters with duplicate identities, they change their gender within their epic tail. Srikandi becomes a warrior (I describe this character in detail in Chapter 4) and Candra Kirana is a princess who disguises herself as a male. I don't believe that Lintang wanted to change her gender, but rather she was drawn to these characters because of their confusion. Her father admitted, "that he felt guilty, that I had probably chosen characters who were in search of their identity because he himself suffered from an identity crisis. She must be asking: who am I, an Indonesian who has never been to Indonesia, or a French person who happens to be half Indonesian?" (*Home*, 192).[9] Her father's reflection suggests that to be "Indonesian" is to go to Indonesia. Thus, travel is positioned as an essential part of Lintang's potential identity.

The *wayang* epics were not the only stories about identity and flying that Lintang grew up with. Like many of the other authors in my book, Chudori mixes Indonesian and world literature to highlight tensions within global identities. The novel describes that Lintang's family would often purchase used books from sellers on the street. However, they also went to the high-end bookstore Shakespeare and Co. to look at and sometimes buy the beautiful books there. One day, Lintang sees a copy of *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry—and wants to buy it. It is a hardcover edition with beautiful illustrations, but it was too expensive for her family to buy. "Please, Maman. I've wanted it now for so long. I want to fly like *Le Petit Prince*" (*Home,* 203). Like Srikandi and Candra Kirana, the prince in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's famous story travels in search of his identity. Home in these stories has "become everywhere and nowhere, abstract and ethereal... like the sky" (Jackson 1995, 35 and 49 qtd in Woods 2014, 2). Lintang's exclamation foreshadows her trip to Indonesia and the kind of home she hopes to find there.

The history and idea of the airplane foregrounds conflicting relationships of time and space that provide insight into how to read and understand the novel. On one hand, "the speed of the aeroplane led the Futurists to proclaim the destabilisation and annihilation of time

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"*Dia memburu identitas.*" (*Pulang*, 186).

9 *Pasti Lintang memilih tokoh-tokoh yang beruba identitas, karena dia juga merasa krisis identitas. Pasti dia tengah bertanya-tanya siapaku dirinya, orang Indonesia yang tak pernah ke Indonesia? Atau orang Perancis setengah Indonesia?* (*Pulang*, 187).

and space as the core of modernity." But on the other, airplanes enabled the straight line of progress, forever moving forward (Simonsen 2005, 99–100). Historian Dorthe Gert Simonsen argues for a third way, that "rather than continuously compressing and finally annihilating time and space, [the airplane] has produced diverse and interacting, occasionally conflicting, times and spaces" (2005, 100). These each point to how the nation, as well as the characters in the novel, can only be known one part at a time.

Tanah Air: Home, and Exile

Lintang finally travels to Indonesia as part of her final project for an undergraduate degree in film. The trip is set into motion when she meets with her professor to discuss her proposal for her final film project. Lintang initially plans to focus on the Algerian immigrant community in Paris. Her professor, however, suggests she find another idea because that topic has already been done many times by students. Lintang counters that she is interested in Algerian immigrants because they are people with two homelands. The professor says Lintang might find similar resonance closer to home because, "that you too, have two homelands" (*Home*, 140).[10] Lintang reflects that she feels different from other immigrants, she is not only mixed-race, but she cannot talk about her other home. "My father came from Indonesia, a distant land that I don't know" (151). Her professor concludes that Lintang must travel to Indonesia to make her documentary. Lintang reluctantly agrees, and secures funding plus a visa for travel and decides her film will allow her to understand "I-N-D-O-N-E-S-I-A." By writing Indonesia with dashes between each letter, Chudori visually expresses how Lintang sees the country as Other. The hyphens create "a deliberately disjointed visual representation of the word, indicating its unfinished status" (Allen 2014).

Dimas remains in France because he is exiled, he is not allowed to return to Indonesia. Even so, Dimas dreams of returning to his country of origin. Soon after his mother dies, Dimas proclaims, "I had to go home. I had to go home! I would find a ticket. Any kind of ticket. Plane, boat, whatever. The important thing was for me to go home" (*Home*,

10 *Dua tanah air* (*Pulang*, 135).

83).[11] Within literature, exile is often connected to, or contrasted with, home. Woods, in her examination of Malawi poetry, asserts that exile is an experience that inhabits the mind and body (Woods 2014, 3). Before Lintang leaves, her father's friends, the Four Pillars, hand Lintang an envelope of money. Lintang hesitates to take this gift, but they urge "Listen, Lintang. We can't go to Jakarta. [...] That's why you are going for us. You will be our eyes and ears" (*Home*, 284).[12] Through their advice, "she knew that she would be ready to explore this foreign world that she called her homeland" (*Home*, 285).[13] In the Indonesian, Chudori uses *tanah air* to refer to "homeland" and thus invokes a certain history of Indonesia as home and how Lintang's father and friends recreate an idea of Indonesia in Paris with their restaurant Tanah Air.

For Lintang's father Dimas, the longing he feels for Indonesia goes beyond emotion or thought; the taste of Luwak coffee and the smell of *kretek*, or clove cigarettes, are key parts of his identity throughout his exile in Paris. He shares Indonesian culture with his family in Paris through those tastes and smells. Throughout the novel there are detailed, mouth-watering descriptions of many of Indonesia's famous dishes. These are especially notable, because even though much of the novel is set in Paris, and eating Indonesian food is established as a once-in-a-while occurrence, there are no descriptions of the tastes and smells of French cuisine, arguably one of the most famous in the world.

After several unsatisfactory attempts to make a living in France, Dimas opens a restaurant with his friends Tjai, Risijaf, and Mas Nug, who also are exiled in Paris. The restaurant is named Tanah Air,[14] or

11 *Aku harus pulang. Aku harus pulang! Aku mencoba mencari tiket. Tiket apa saja. Pesewat, kapal laut, apa saja. Yang penting aku pulang* (*Pulang* 84).

12 *Kami tak bisa menginjak Jakarta* [...] *Jadi Lintang akan menjadi mata dan telinga kami* (*Pulang*, 271).

13 *Lintang merasa siap untuk meluncur ke sebuah dunia asing yang disebut sebagai tanah airnya* (*Pulang*, 272).

14 The restaurant Dimas and his friends open is based on a real restaurant in Paris. In an article for "Inside Indonesia" Chudori describes her inspiration: "I first came across the Restoran Indonesia, on the Rue de Vaugirard in central Paris, when I was on a trip around Europe with my friends from North America and Europe to celebrate finishing my education in Canada. I had been a scholarship student, so money was tight and, with no certainty about ever travelling overseas again, I felt this was my one and only opportunity to touch Europe before going home and entering the 'real world' filled with responsibilities. I never imagined that my first experience with that Indonesian restaurant in Paris would be my first encounter with black hole known as Indonesian History" (2014).

"land air," but the term is more often translated and understood as "homeland" or "motherland" in Indonesian. The term *Tanah-Air* was initially coined by Muhammad Yamin in his 1920 poem *Tanah-Air,* and it emerged as one of several terms to describe the situation of the archipelagic nation; Indonesia is a land of many islands divided and connected by water. The two words, *tanah* and *air*, invoke oppositional forces, land and water, coming together to create the nation (Alverdian 2021, 65–67). It is not just one or the other, but both/and.

Tanah Air not only invokes the homeland, but it also reinforces the senses as primary tools of knowledge. Chudori would not only be aware of the poem, part of a collection of some of Indonesia's first poems written in Malay (which would then become Indonesian), but also of the popular song, "Lukisan Tanah Air" by Yongky Djohary. Since he was a child, Djohary painted and composed songs about the beauty of the Indonesian countryside. As a person, Djohary represented Indonesia's desired unity out of differences—he was ethnic Chinese and Christian, but also could read the Quran. From his mother he learned about *seriosa* songs and competitions. *Seriosa* was a popular musical style in the 1950s and 60s that used vocal techniques from Western Opera and promoted national identity. For Djojary, "*seriosa* represented the nation, religious attitudes, moral fortitude, brilliance of thought, and sensitivity to the beauty of Indonesian society" (Alverdian 2021, 126). Musically the song represents in-betweenness because Djojary wanted to create a *seriosa* song about Indonesia that was not so dependent on Western musical influences. The music of *seriosa* borrows from the rhythms of Javanese *gamelan* and uses Sudanese melodies as background to lyrics that "paint" the beauty of the land (Aleverdian 2021, 128–29). Likewise, the restaurant Tanah Air did more than serve food; it shared similar aspirations as *seriosa*—to foster and represent the beauty and creativity of the nation. Towards this aim, the restaurant sponsored poetry readings and entertainment, on the walls hung *batik*[15] and *wayang* puppets.

The duality of Tanah Air reflects Edward Said's reflection on exile—"It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native

15 Indonesian *batik* is a traditional textile art characterized by its intricate patterns created using a wax-resist dyeing technique. It holds cultural significance, often reflecting regional motifs and is recognized as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage.

place, between the self and its true home." By creating the restaurant Tanah Air, the friends are not just creating a bit of Indonesia in Paris, but they are also invoking the uncertain state of their identity. In the previous chapter of this book, airports were actual spaces of change, of waiting, of in-between. In *Pulang*, the experience of being an exile in France is like that in-between space. It is not an actual airport, but in the same way it is a space of waiting. Dimas's exile articulates a relationship to home/Indonesia that is marked in nostalgia and longing and establishes the dilemma his daughter will face in trying to claim her own identity. Lintang must trespass out of these opposing forces to find her way out of the in-between.

"Love at First Sight"

In the novel, love is centered within the eyes, the sense of sight. For example, Lintang's mother, Vivienne Deveraux fell in love with Dimas the first time she saw him from a distance. Her feelings were like a bolt of lightning, *le coup de foudre*, or "love at first sight." Vivienne, however, did not even believe that it was possible, "How could you fall in love with a person you'd only just met? Or someone whose eyes you'd only just seen?" (*Home*, 206).[16] Vivienne sees him near the statue of Victor Hugo at a student protest in 1968, and she describes that at that moment the entire world disappeared. They dated, married, and had a daughter. The desire she felt through her eyes changed her life. According to Dimas's recollections of the first time he met Vivienne, he saw her at a distance, and the key moment is when, "for a moment she looked in my direction" (*Home*, 2). The Indonesian makes the eyes even more active, *hanya sekilas mata itu menyapu ke arahku,* which I translate as "just a glance those eyes swept towards me" (*Pulang*, 9). Thus, the eyes are given agency to cover the distance between them. Perhaps not just the physical distance, but the cultural and political as well.

Vivienne, however, was not Dimas's first love. When he was a student in Indonesia, he met Surti and they fell in love. At first, they courted by exchanging poetic verses, but then their relationship grew physical.

16 *Bagaimana mungkin kita bisa mencintai seseorang yang baru kita kenal? Atau bahkan yang baru saja bertabrakan mata*? (*Pulang*, 202).

They even imagined the names of their future children. But when Surti wanted to introduce Dimas to her parents and to progress the relationship, Dimas balked. He reasoned that he was still a student with so much of the world yet to explore. Surti then marries Mas Hananto because he is older, already settled in a job, and offers a more stable future. Dimas and Surti remain friends, and she even uses the names they dreamed about for her actual children.

Vision and perception conjure relationships as physical spaces that can be traversed. In their relationship, Vivienne must admit that France would never be home to Dimas, and therefore prepared her family to follow Dimas in his (hopeful) return to Indonesia. She made sure that their daughter Lintang, could speak not just French, but also Indonesian and English. Each year Dimas would apply for a visa to go home, and each year, like other political exiles, his request was denied. Finally, Vivienne implores Dimas to let go of this dream, to "shut his eyes forever to Indonesia."[17] Instead his eyes reflected back the pain he felt, and the conversation was "one dot in a long line of dots that finally forced us to take our separate ways." (*Home*, 214).[18] The language Chudori uses to describe the trajectory and end of their relationship is like the path described by Ahmed that is created by direction that allows the body to take shape. "So we walk on the path as it is before us, but it is only before us as an effect of being walked upon" (2020, 16). Inhabiting spaces through movement and seeing makes those spaces real. This productive magic is then transferred from parents to daughter. For Dimas and Vivienne, the path of their marriage ends, but Lintang creates and follows her own path.

The tension between Suri and Vivienne, between Indonesia and France, sets the stage for Lintang's own explorations of love and place. Like her mother, Lintang does not believe in *le coup de foudre.* Her boyfriend, Narayana LeFebvre, or Nara for short, was also of mixed heritage; his father was French, and his mother was Javanese. Lintang first met Nara at the library, he helped her pick up a pile of books that she had dropped. But there was no cosmic sign indicating they should be together. But because of the Indonesian touches like *batik* or *wayang* and conversation,

17 *Menutup mata* (*Pulang*, 208).

18 *Satu titik dari garis panjang yang akhirnya memaksa kami untuk mengambil jalan masing-masing* (*Pulang*, 209).

Lintang felt comfortable at Nara's home (unlike Lintang, Nara lived with his parents) and would often spend entire weekends there.

Lintang's boyfriend Nara and his family portray an alternative side to Indonesian expat life in Paris. Not only because Nara's family were not political exiles and were welcomed at the Indonesian embassy, but also because they also were financially well-off, dressing in fine clothes and living in a nice house. Lintang urged Nara to meet her father, so Nara invited them both to an elite restaurant in Brussels called L'Amour. The restaurant was in a cave and served lavish food tailored to the taste preferences of each guest. Lintang worried this was not an appropriate place to take her father, even though she had gone there before and it was one of Nara's family's favorites for special occasions. The evening begins ok, but as the conversation moves from politics to film, and then to poetry the tension builds between the two men as Lintang tries desperately to keep the mood friendly. Finally, the evening ends, tense, but without a clear victor.

The next day, Lintang confronts her father in his apartment and demands to know why he was so critical and difficult, why Nara and her father both saw things differently. "He's pretentious!" Dimas complained and recited a litany of complaints against this "rich bourgeois kid." As they argued, Lintang felt she gained insight into why her mother left—"How could she have endured living with a man who always had to criticize everything that was wrong in his eyes?" (*Home*, 185).[19] The cause of the tension then shifts from people to place, from the present to the past. Lintang remembers finding an unsent letter her father wrote to Surti in Indonesia, confessing his love. Lintang showed the letter to her mother, and their marriage ended soon after. This disagreement and its aftermath compel Lintang to finally realize that the thing missing in her life "was her father's past life, the part of his life she had never known" (*Home*, 189).[20]

The stories about Lintang's and Dimas's romantic entanglements mirror each other. They each have a love in France, but then another love in Indonesia. Lintang and her father are grasping at the stars in search of identity, between concrete experiences in France/Indonesia, with the

19 *"Dia pretensius!"* [...] *"Dia anak orang kaya"* [...] *"Bagaimana Maman bisa betah hidup bersama lelaki yang gemar mengkritik segala yang salah di matanya?"* (*Pulang*, 179).

20 *kehidupan Ayah yang sama sekali tak dikenalnya* (*Pulang*, 183).

world of myth. Lintang decides that to know who she is in the present, she must reveal the past within the future. Time once again becomes confused, "because there never was such a thing as 'this moment,' any more than there is a 'this moment' now that it is all over. You can check this for yourself. Just look for the present, and what you will see is a memory of the near past drifting ever away, crumbling, unsteady. There is only the past, and not even that can be grasped." (Alan Klima 2019, 4). The different relationships are like a ripple effect of identity; a disturbance that amplifies. Dimas navigates between Surti, his unrequited love in Indonesia, and Vivienne, the women he marries and then divorces in Paris. In reverse, Lintang has a longtime boyfriend in Paris named Narayana (Nara), but then she discovers a new love, *le coup de foudre*, or love at first sight, with Alam, who she meets in Indonesia. Her conflicting feelings about people give insight into the complicated feelings she develops regarding the country of her father's birth.

I-N-D-O-N-E-S-I-A

Lintang's favorite sentence from *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry is, "You can see clearly only with the heart. The essence cannot be seen with the eyes" (*Home*, 263).[21] Seeing is often connected with truth—but as philosopher Earl Connee contends, seeing is not the same as believing. Also, he continues, there is a pleasure that comes when seeing, truth, and believing all align. That pleasure, however, derives more from the act of seeing rather than the intrinsic truth of the perception. Thus "seeing the truth" is an action upon the truth (1994). As I've described, the reader of *Pulang* is constantly reminded to mind the gap between what is seen and what is heard, smelled, or tasted. The senses constantly reorient the reader between different locations, people, and truths.

During her time in Indonesia, Lintang uses the camera to see, navigate, and understand her two identities. Movie-making becomes her eyes, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty recognizes, the eyes can perceive two contradictory truths at once. Since she was little, she loved to make films.

21 *Dengan menggunakan hati, kita bisa melihat dengan jernih. Sesuatu yang begitu penting justru tak terlihat kasat mata* (*Pulang*, 253).

First with a used video camera her parents bought for her, and then in school. Like photographs, film is how Lintang seeks the truth, but, as Walter Benjamin describes, the photograph is something more than a visual representation—"[Benjamin] believed photography did something similar for the aspects of our world that eluded standard vision. He had in mind the ability of the camera to extend human observation beyond its normal parameters" (Edwards 2006, 4). Identity is not something that lies in the senses, but in the heart. In Indonesia, Lintang meets Alam, and it is the first time she experiences love at first sight.

For her project, in Indonesia Lintang is recording a film about the events in the 1960s while experiencing the protests in 1998; the beginning and the end of the New Order Government. Performance scholar, Sean Metzer, writing about the nonlinear plays of Naomi Iizuka,[22] describes a similar use of history in the plays: "yet these do not serve as indices of verifiable events but instead as observation points, frames that yield alternatives to linear progressive temporalities." This produces "a layering of texts—of actual chronicles of events and fictions of what could have been—shape what might otherwise appear as incomplete characters. Subjects emerge in a relation of figures through one another, through actions in the present associated with those in the past" (Metzer 2011, 279). The history Lintang examines compelled her father into exile and those events shape the characters of the novel.

The novel not only looks at time because the narrative shifts between past and present, but Chudori foregrounds time in relation to place throughout the story. As Dimas was getting ready to leave Indonesia, his friend Hananto, gave him his watch. On the night he is arrested, in the book's prologue, he is working to develop photographs in a dark room, when he heard a knock that indicated "the time had come for me to leave this room that knew no such thing as time" (*Home*, iv),[23] not just because it was dark and he had no watch or clock, but that history, his past, the present, and the future collapse into one and another. Later, Dimas gives the watch to Lintang, who finally is able to give it to Hananto's children causing time to materially shift orientation from Indonesia to France and back again. The words, moving between Indonesian, French, and

22 Metzer focuses on the plays *The Vanishing Point* and *36 Views* in his analysis of Naomi Iizuka's work.

23 *Itu pertanda aku harus keluar dari ruang yang tak mengenal waktu ini* (*Pulang*, 2).

English, such as *jam*, watch, *regarder*, hour, and *waktu*, further connect seeing with time as many of these words contain duplicate meanings, that like I-N-D-O-N-E-S-I-A continue to shift.

The instability of time, place, and truth that Chudori constructs throughout the novel finally enables Lintang to trespass towards home as unhomely. A few days before Lintang's departure, for Indonesia, she and her father spend a day wandering to their favorite places in Paris. They end the day at the famous Père Lachaise cemetery. Dimas remarks they are like flâneurs, "which doesn't necessarily mean this to be a meaningless journey" (*Home*, 288). Stephanie Rosenbloom, writing for the *New York Times*, describes that to be a flâneur means to be walking the city without direction, and with a sense of discovery, "To walk a city led by your senses rather than a destination is to awaken to the city and, possibly, to yourself. It's an opportunity to expand your capacity for wonder, to discover and delight in things you might have missed had you been aiming to get somewhere" (2023). Framed as a lecture to his daughter, through the character of Dimas, Chudori asserts the importance of the flâneur to defining home—"A flâneur will forever be looking and building his home in the flow and motion of movement. He might feel he has left his home, but in fact he built a home on his journey" (*Home*, 293).[24] At first it seems that Alam might be the answer to her identity—through him she could find a home in Indonesia. But Lintang is uncertain, she also misses her home, and her boyfriend, in Paris.

Lintang rethinks home and nation in a way that resonates with how Chudori, through her father, defines flâneur—always moving. At the end of the novel, her father has died, but he gets his last wish to be buried in Indonesia, in the cemetery named Karet. At the funeral, Lintang stands between the two loves of her life, Nara and Alam, her potential husbands, but it is not clear if she will end up with either of them. Lintang claims the ability to decide whether or not she wants to pursue a domestic home, an identity as a "good wife or mother." Lintang also contemplates whether France or Indonesia will become her national home. She realizes, "It would be much easier not to choose

24 *Seorang flâneur akan terus mencari, dan membangun rumah di dalam aliran dan gerakan pindahan. Dia merasa telah meninggalkan rumah, tetapi berhasil membangun sebuah rumah di dalam perjalanan* (*Pulang*, 279–80).

and pretend there were no consequences. But, as you said, to choose requires courage, it is what one must do" (*Home*, 485).[25] The original Indonesian clearly ties the choice to travel, *adalah jalan hidup yang berani*, which roughly translates into "the journey of life that is brave."

Lintang's decision remains a mystery, Chudori does not reveal who or where Lintang selects. I think the reason is because it is not that important if she marries, who she marries, or what kind of home(s) she ends up in. The point is that Lintang is the one who decides; she has the agency. Darkness then once again falls and time and place collapse, "I didn't know whether I was in the Père Lachaise or Karet." Like in *Departures* by Nh. Dini, *Pulang* is not about arriving at a home, but rather home as orientation and movement. The Indonesian titles emphasize this relationship to home through travel, it is not a place, but a journey. Thus Chudori rewrites a path for woman that focuses on the travel and the adventure. Each woman decides her own way and destination. Trespassing becomes an activation of home.

25 *Lebih mudah untuk tidak memilih, seolah tak ada konsekuensi. Tetapi seperti katamu, memilih adalah jalan hidup yang berani* (*Pulang*, 450–51).

Postscript: Beyond the Horizon

Throughout this book I use different modes of transportation as a means to understand the subversive potential, or trespassing, within various works by women. They are linked because the history of transportation in Indonesia is one of development, connection, and adaptation. Women's creative practices, likewise, engaged with global aesthetics and markets in order to find audiences and gain acceptance. In the process, they created characters and stories that challenged local gender ideologies that were part of customs, religion, and/or government policies. I want to look at one more story to think about how the idea of trespassing might expand into the future.

In the short story *Kemukus* ("Meteors") by Clara Ng, Cen, an earthling, lived on another planet with her partner, Tiansun. But unlike Tiansun, a creature with many eyes, Cen's life is short; Tiansun's family can live for many hundreds of years longer. To travel across galaxies, they use a spaceship, called "Magnitudes." But Cen teaches Tiansun about beauty through language that endures until all that is left behind is a ticking watch and their infant daughter. There is both longing and a deep sense of home in the strange galactic realm for Cen.

Ng deliberately plays with gender in the story, and up until now I have resisted gendering either of the characters. This fluidity is enabled because Indonesian has a genderless pronoun, *dia*. In an interview with the translator Toni Pollard, Ng explains, "When I say '*dia*' in my mind, I never specifically refer to a particular gender… 'Dia' can be understood as a man, a woman, a neither-male-nor-female, or a between-male-and-female" (2019).

Through her deliberate use of *dia*, and making roles indeterminant, Ng hoped to break the conventions that cast women as wife and mother. The translator struggled to find a satisfactory way to do this in English, finally compromising by making Tiansun a "he" and Cen a "she." This choice,

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however, is complicated because the story ends with Tiansun breastfeeding his baby. The story imagines a future where people travel by spaceship and gender and sexuality become possibilities rather than fixed points.

Magnitudes, the name of the spaceship in the story carries two meanings: one evokes the immensity of size, the other, more precise, measures the brightness of a star as seen from Earth—a science of light across distance. The name of the ship therefore summons the vastness of the universe (space) and time. Tiansun experiences time in a way that is diametrically the opposite of Cen, but also tries to experience the limits of human-time. The stars, light and dark, are also key motifs within the story that mean life and death. They live in an area with many meteor showers, because it helps Cen overcome feelings of homesickness.

> Tiansun still remembered Cen's embrace on the night of the meteor shower. The sky was drowned in the light from the trails of thousands of meteors racing across the sky from north to south. So many of them, crisscrossing each other, bright at first, but gradually fading until they died out in the darkness (*Meteors*).[1]

Without Cen, Tiansun became accustomed to the darkness, only memories remained. The power of memories in the story however reflect Ng's own reflections on writing. *Salah satu alasan Clara menulis adalah karena ia tidak abadi, tapi ceritanya immortal* ("One of the reasons I write is because people do not live forever, but stories are immortal") (Kompas 2011, my translation). In a way, Ng offers writing (and I would add performing and filmmaking) as a mode of transportation, what I have been calling trespassing, where women's ideas can cross time and space. Writing, film, performance, and music replace technological travel as preferred vehicles for trespassing.

Traveling Beyond These Pages

One of my desires in writing this book is to introduce readers of English to the dynamic works of literature, film, and performance of women

1 *Tiansun masih ingat pelukan Cen di malam hujan kemukus. Langit tenggelam di tengah sinar dari ekor sibuan meteor yang berlarian di langit, dari ujung utara menuju ujung selatan. Kelebatannya bersilang-silang, tampak cerah pada mulanya, lalu semakin berdenyar sampai mata dalam kegelapan* (*Kemukus*).

in Indonesia. But I do not even attempt a comprehensive survey of the many women who "trespass" in their creative work and lives. In this section I want to briefly introduce three more of my favorite women writers.

S. Rukiah (1927–96) was one of Indonesia's most important early woman writers. She was a schoolteacher and wrote poems, short stories, and novels. Her work explores how "the constraints of the female predicament are contrasted with the freedom enjoyed by male characters" (Gallop 2021). Her best-known novel, *Kejatuhan dan Hati* (*The Fall and the Heart*), published in 1950, is set against the backdrop of Indonesia's struggle for independence. Susi, the main character, struggles for love against societal and family expectations. Similar to Nh. Dini's *Departures*, Rukiah's story offers a sharp critique of marriage and insight into how women navigated and reacted to the emerging Indonesian nation. Similar too, critics like Lisa Hill (2015) complain that the novel is too emotional and not does not include enough politics or military action. Susi *feels* too much. These kind of opinions ignore how the book offers insight to women's lives and thoughts at the time. The author, Rukiah was arrested during the Communist purge in the 1960s, leaving her six children without anyone to care for them. She negotiated her release by promising to never write again.

Next is the first Indonesian author I ever encountered, in William H. Fredrick's history class at Ohio University. The novel *Saman* (1998) by Ayu Utami (b. 1968) completely changed my perceptions of literature and women in Indonesia. The novel is bold, sexual, and experiments with structure. Utami is probably the best-known woman writer in Indonesia (and one of the best-known writers). So many others have written about her and the novel *Saman*, I decided not to include her in this book. Her work though, however, the way for many of the authors I do include.

The third author, Laksmi Pamuntjak (b. 1971) is a bilingual writer, journalist, and poet who lives and works internationally. Her novels *Amba/The Question of Red* and *Fall Baby* (originally written in English) reimagine the story of Srikandi as a contemporary tale. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, Srikandi is a trans woman warrior from the *Mahabharata*. In Indonesia, the character has, on the one hand, become a symbol for women's progress, but often within the confines of gender expectations.

On the other hand, Srikandi is celebrated and often used as a symbol in the LGBTQ movement in Indonesia. In the novel Srikandi becomes Siri, an international art dealer who voyages around the world, but also must reckon with her past. Questions of home, identity, and travel also surface as Siri searches for her father(s).

These three novels, and their women writers, are among the many Indonesian women who offer ideas and stories that can be understood through the framework of trespassing. I hope my book inspires my readers to seek out additional women authors, such as these, and explore their work for themselves. I also hope the idea of trespassing allows insight into the subversive potential contained in stories about women's lives, journeys, and desires. Rather than determining whether a book is "good," or not (although I will maintain the many texts explored in this book *are* good, very good), trespassing offers insight into how creative expression interacts as one part of complex global societies.

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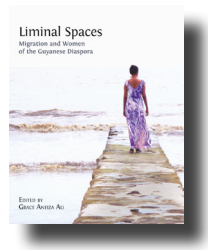

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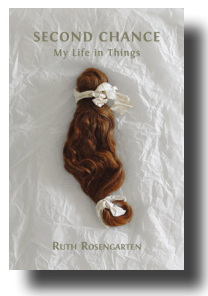

Trespassing

The Subversive Travel of Indonesian Women in Literature and Performance

Jennifer Goodlander

From the intriguing commencement of the book with a children's tale about a young girl and her mother searching for and finding a new, better school, to the final story set sometime in the future, involving a couple of ambiguous gender travelling by spaceship, women characters are constantly on the move, having new experiences, making new social connections, and experiencing the transcendental power of travel.

Barbara Hatley, University of Tasmania

This volume explores how Indonesian women writers and artists challenge the boundaries of home, nation, and identity through acts of movement, both real and imagined. Moving across novels, films, performance, and lived experience, Jennifer Goodlander introduces 'trespassing' as a framework for understanding how women navigate spaces where they are not expected to belong.

Organized around modes of travel—by foot, train, boat, and plane—the book reveals how mobility becomes a form of resistance, enabling women to redefine themselves beyond the constraints of tradition, gender roles, and national expectations. From wandering protagonists to globally circulating artists, these stories foreground travel as a site of agency and transformation.

Blending literary analysis with ethnography and performance studies, this volume offers a dynamic, interdisciplinary account of Indonesian women's creativity. It will appeal to scholars and students of gender studies, Southeast Asian studies, literature, and performance, while remaining accessible to general readers interested in global women's voices and contemporary Indonesian culture.

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